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STORYTELLING ON THE STUMP:

Women Narrating Race and Gender in Texas Politics

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STORYTELLING ON THE STUMP:

Women Narrating Race and Gender in Texas Politics

By

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the wonderful women who generously agreed to participate in this project. Thank you for opening your hearts, minds, and lives to me. Your wisdom, energy, and unwavering commitment to social justice truly inspires me. I am comforted by the fact that many of you are, or will be, representing the interests of our country's most marginalized at city hall, in the Texas legislature, and perhaps someday in the halls of the U.S. Congress.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have numerous people to thank for their assistance and support with this dissertation. I would first like to extend my gratitude to my dissertation advisor, Michael Young, as well as the other members of my committee, Christine Williams, Maya Charrad, Victoria Rodriguez, Javier Auyero, and Pam Paxton. You have each served as a role model for me in significant ways. I sincerely hope that all that you have invested in me is reflected in this work.

I was fortunate to benefit from the assistance of several programs at The University of Texas at Austin. I wish to thank the Graduate School for providing me a generous fellowship during my last year of doctoral studies. I would also like to thank the Center for Women's and Gender Studies for their financial assistance with this project, as well as for their effort to provide a space for gender scholars to flourish at this university.

I owe my husband, Daniel, an enormous debt of gratitude for his support in finishing this project. Daniel, thank you for your constant encouragement and all the times you picked up dinner for us over the last six months as I tried to work another ten-hour day. You are the best partner anyone could ask for, and I only hope I can give you half of the love and encouragement you give to me.

Finally, I would like to thank my reader, Jenn Tran, for her help with this project. Jenn has been my reader since I started graduate school, and I always like to say that

the time I spend with her is the most valuable two hours of my week. Jenn, thank you for your perfectionism.

Storytelling on the Stump:

Women Narrating Race and Gender in Texas Politics

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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Political representation remains one of the areas in American life in which gender inequality is most pronounced, and scholars claim that women's reluctance to run for office is now the most significant barrier to gender equality in the political sphere. Yet, researchers have not adequately grappled with the complexities and contradictions in women's "deciding to run" accounts and have often overlooked the varied narrative strategies of women leaders across race, class, and social movement identities. I conducted 46 interviews with women leaders in Texas and fieldwork in a political campaign to examine the stories women tell to explain their decisions whether or not to run for office. I find that the "deciding to run" narratives that African-American women and Latinas employ are distinct from the stories white women use to explain their decisions whether or not to run for office, as they more often draw from civil rights discourses of courage, confidence, and commitment to their causes. I argue that feminist organizations actually encourage women to downplay their political ambition in the attempt to spread their social movement

messages that women need to be recruited more heavily to run for office. These messages play an important role in influencing the reluctance story told by most of the white women I interviewed. I argue that structural factors such as majority-minority and majority-white voting districts also play a large role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of candidates and potential candidates, as raced-gendered and social movement discourses take different forms and carry varying weight in these political contexts.

My findings challenge the dominant explanation for women's sparse levels of office-holding, which suggests that women are under-represented in politics because they lack the confidence to enter political races. In addition, I highlight the political ambition of African-American women and Latinas, whose remarkable success records in seeking and winning elective office have not been accounted for in current paradigms explaining women's under-representation. Finally, my research exposes the cultural dynamics underlying women's "deciding to run" explanations, as I illuminate how women draw from raced-gendered and social movement discourses to account for their political decisions.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

"My greatest political asset, which professional politicians fear, is my mouth, out of which comes all sorts of things one should avoid for reasons of political expediency." – Shirley Chisholm

In August of 2011, *New Yorker* magazine published an article titled "The Transformation of Michelle Bachman," in which reporter Ryan Lizza documented the ways in which Bachman's personal narrative has changed as she has moved from a Minnesota Senator to a contender for the Republican Presidential nomination.

Notable among these transformations is Bachman's evolving account of how she came to run for her seat in the Minnesota Senate, displacing a Republican incumbent. Bachman now portrays her decision to place her name in nomination for the Republican endorsement in 2000 as an impulsive decision made in response to the urging of friends. Yet, Lizza documents evidence of an earlier narrative about her decision to run. Two Minnesota newspapers had previously noted that Bachman had been planning to seek the Republican nomination for a year prior to the Republican endorsement convention. In fact, Bachman had declared to one reporter, "…I told *the incumbent* that if he is not willing to be more responsive to the citizens, I may have to run for his seat."

The construction and reshaping of political narratives is not unique to Michelle Bachman. In fact, answering the question "Why did you run" is a particularly treacherous task for women candidates, as women must craft responses to questions of political ambition that make known their desire to be considered viable candidates without violating gender norms that call women to present themselves with selflessness and humility. Currently, the dominant explanation for women's sparse levels of office-holding is that women are under-represented in political office because they lack the confidence and ambition to enter political races as frequently as do men. Yet, the growing literature on women's paths to public office has not adequately grappled with the complexities that shape women's "deciding to run" accounts, nor has the literature recognized the varied narrative strategies of women leaders across race, class, and social movement identities.

As I interviewed women leaders across the state of Texas for this research, I found that this "story of reluctance," dominant in political science literature and touted by women's political organizations, did not precisely reflect the variation and complexities in their stories. Yes, some women did express reluctance to run for office. For example, Mary, who holds a city council seat in an urban area, accounted for her decision to run for office simply by saying, "I was talked into it." Other candidates and potential candidates I interviewed, however, expressed a great deal of confidence in their leadership capabilities and an unabashed interest in running for office. Carol, who has served in the Texas legislature since 2005, gave the following account of why she decided to run for office:

> I was very unhappy with the person that was in the seat at the time. He had been our representative for … years, and there had been no change in our community. He never held town hall meetings. He never tried to communicate with the people. I thought to myself, somebody should run against this guy, and who better to do it than me!

Why do Mary and Carol present such different accounts of their decision to run for office? I seek to answer this question in the pages that follow. In this dissertation, I present findings from 46 interviews I conducted with women leaders in Texas and four months of fieldwork I conducted in a Latina candidate's political campaign. I examine the narrative strategies women candidates and potential candidates deploy to negotiate the disjunction between their drive for public office and restrictive, and yet fluid, gender discourses. I am particularly interested in how women leaders pull from gendered, raced, and social movement discourses to construct their "deciding to run" narratives.

I seek to answer the following questions in this research: What stories do women candidates and potential candidates tell to account for their decisions whether or not to run for political office? How are these women's narrative strategies shaped by dominant race-gender discourses, by women's social movement participation, and by the political context? Finally, what complexities emerge in these "deciding to run" accounts?

I begin this introductory chapter with a brief historical overview of the inroads women have made into American politics. I survey what we know and what is left to be understood about the gendered dynamics of political leadership and the persistently low levels of women's representation in the U.S. I discuss the feminist theoretical perspectives that undergird my research and introduce narrative analysis as a research method that has much to contribute to our understanding of the raced-gendered dynamics underlying political life. Finally, I present an overview of the chapters that follow.

Making Inroads

A vibrant democracy depends on the equal representation of all groups in its society. The U.S. is still reeling from a turbulent history of denying political rights to members of its most marginalized groups. Despite tremendous changes that have occurred over the last four decades, our political system still reflects and reinforces the pervasive racial, gender, and economic inequalities that characterize American life. Women have a long and interesting history of participation in American politics. Three women were first elected to a state legislature in 1894, 26 years before women were granted the right to vote across the U.S. Women maintained a small presence in state and Congressional elective bodies, often making inroads into political office by completing the terms of their deceased husbands.

First wave feminist activists organized for women's suffrage in the hopes that women would have opportunities to make significant changes on behalf of women

and children as elected leaders. It would, however, take more than half a century after women were granted suffrage before this goal would begin to be realized. Until the 1970's, women held less than 5% of elected seats across the U.S.

The feminist and Civil Rights movements of the 1960's ushered in a new era of progress, as these movements made integration of the political sphere a top priority. Since the early 1970's, the percentage of women holding public office in the United States has more than quintupled. Women currently hold 90 of the 535 seats (16.8 percent) in the U.S. Congress (CAWP 2012). Women serve in 71 (22.4 percent) of the 317 state-level elected executive positions and hold 1,750 (23.7 percent) of the 7,382 state legislative seats (CAWP 2012).

Despite the gains women have made in winning elected office over the last four decades, women remain drastically under-represented in electoral politics at the local, state, and national levels. From Congress down to state legislatures and city councils, women hold just 15% to 25% of elected seats in American political institutions. The U.S. is ranked 69th among countries worldwide in the proportion of women serving in national parliament, falling behind other advanced industrialized countries like Sweden, Denmark, and the U.K., as well as less developed countries like Uganda, Nepal, and Bolivia (Inter Parliamentary Union 2011). Pamela Paxton and Melanie Hughs (2007) identify the U.S. as falling in the "middle of the pack" in terms of our success in electing women to office. Paxton and Hughes (2007) also demonstrate that levels of women's representation in the U.S. are increasing at a

much slower rate than in other countries around the world. In fact, gains in women's representation plateaued in 2004 (Sanbonmatsu 2006). In 2010, the U.S. Congress saw the first decline in women's representation in 30 years (CAWP 2012), and women's representation in state legislatures declined significantly for the first time in decades (CAWP 2012). The 2012 elections present a critical opportunity to regain this loss for women's representation. Redistricting following the 2010 U.S. Census presents new opportunities for women to run in open seats, and the Presidential election is predicted to bring women voters to the polls in higher numbers (CAWP 2011).

The Significance of Women's Representation

As women and racial and ethnic minority groups have attained elected office in increasing numbers over the last four decades, scholars have sought to measure the degree to which marginalized groups are represented in the nation's political life and the impact that representation has on the attitudes and political behavior of constituents. In order to analyze the degree to which marginalized groups are represented in political office, scholars differentiate between two distinct, yet intersecting, forms of representation. Descriptive representation, or what Phillips (1995) calls a "politics of presence," refers to the degree to which the diversity within an elected body mirrors the diversity within the community being represented by that elected body. Proponents of increased descriptive representation argue that the presence of members of marginalized groups in elected bodies has important

symbolic power, as these leaders can legitimate the political system in the eyes of those who, due to historical legacies of discrimination, view the political system with distrust. According to this view, voters who have traditionally been alienated from politics will be more inclined to participate in political life when they are represented by elected officials who share their salient identities (Mansbridge 1999).

Evidence suggests that women voters do express a preference to be represented by women candidates (Banducci and Karp 2000; Lawless 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2003; Rosenthal 1995). Evidence is mixed, however, as to whether women leaders serve as the catalyst for increased political participation of women (Dolan 2008). Some studies have found that increases in levels of women's representation leads to increased political participation of women constituents (Atkeson 2003; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). Others find little to no evidence that increased levels of women's representation results in the increased political participation of women (Lawless 2004). This research is likely complicated by the varying ages, racial backgrounds, and socioeconomic status of women as a group, as well as the different political contexts in which women live.

Theorists have argued that descriptive representation serves as an approximate measure of how well the interests of marginalized groups are represented in legislative discourse and policy outcomes (Mansbridge 1999). Because of its emphasis on characteristics over action, however, descriptive representation has been criticized as an inadequate and essentialist measure of the quality of representation of

marginalized groups. More recently, scholars have begun to employ the concept of substantive representation to analyze the behavior of elected leaders and the outcomes generated by electoral bodies. Substantive representation has thus far been measured by analyzing roll call votes of representatives (Griffin and Newman 2007; Rocca Sanchez and Uscinski 2008), policy outcomes of electoral bodies (Hajnal 2009; Preuhs 2007), and institutional practices such as hiring (Leal and Martinez-Ebers 2004; Meier et al 2005). Scholars have also claimed that substantive representation can shape political agendas (Mansbridge 1999) and the very process by which decisions are made within political bodies (Rosenthal 1998; Thomas 1994).

Research has overwhelmingly found that women leaders do, in fact, tend to represent women's interests and preferences on women's rights issues, as well as issues such as gun control and social welfare spending of which women are more likely to favor. Studies have found that women leaders are more likely to claim they have a unique responsibility to represent women constituents and are more likely to identify women's issues as a key concern (Dodson 2006; Reingold 2000; Thomas 1994). Furthermore, women leaders tend to vote in favor of bills on women's issues (Dodson 2006; Dolan and Ford 1997; Swers 2002) and are more likely to be the leaders in introducing and championing such legislation (Dodson 2006; Reingold 2000; Swers 2002; Thomas 1994). Evidence also suggests that, under favorable conditions, women also change cultural norms in legislative institutions, emphasizing consensus-building over winner-take-all approaches and adopting roles as facilitators when running committee hearings (Kathlene 1994; Rosenthal 1998).

Despite a large body of evidence documenting that women leaders do, in fact, represent women's interest in legislative institutions, distinctions between men and women's voting patterns on women-friendly issues are small compared to differences by party affiliation (Reingold 2008; Swers 2002). In other words, men who identify as Democrats are more likely to substantively represent women's interests than Republican women, but Republican women are more likely to represent women's interests than Republican men. In addition, women's capacity to assume leadership roles in introducing women-friendly legislation and to adopt alternative leadership styles is circumscribed by party dominance, institutional norms, and the number of women present in their legislative bodies (Dodson 2006; Reingold 2008; Swers 2002; Thomas 1994).

The Reluctance Explanation

One of the primary questions driving research on gender and politics is why the level of women's representation in U.S. politics is still so low. In earlier decades, scholars thought that voter bias against women played a major role in limiting levels of women's representation in politics. It was thought that women candidates had great difficulty winning the support of voters, and consequently, potential women candidates were discouraged from entering the arena. To the astonishment of many, however, current research suggests that women no longer face discrimination by voters at the ballot box (Dolan 2004; Seltzer, Newman and Leighton 1997). Evidence suggests that The media does cover men and women's campaigns differently

(Kittilson and Fridkin 2008); and public attitudes about women's capacity to lead are influenced by the interplay of gender stereotypes, the requirements of the political office (Fox and Oxley 2003; Lublin and Brewer 2003), and the issues that are in the forefront during a given election (Falk and Kenski 2006; Lawless 2004). These stereotypes do not, however, appear to have an overall negative impact on the electability of women candidates (Dolan 2008). Furthermore, evidence suggests that women candidates are able to raise as much money as men (Burrell 2005, Fox 2006; Hogan 2007), though Burrell (2005) argues that women's groups have accounted for eliminating the gender gap in fundraising.

Researchers now suggest that women face their major obstacle to election to public office, not on Election Day, but during the candidate emergence process, when potential candidates decide whether or not to enter political races. The candidate emergence process appears to be gendered in ways that are of great consequence for women's representation. Elite gatekeepers play an important role in determining who enters the political arena. Since most elites are white males who tend to value candidate backgrounds and experiences that mirror their own, women and minority men are often overlooked during the candidate recruitment process. Entry into the political arena is particularly difficult in states that have a traditionalistic culture in which the political process is dominated by elites who keep entry into their circles under lock and key (Palmer and Simon 2006). Entry is also more difficult for women and minority men in more professionalized political systems, where competition for positions is more fierce (King 2000; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Squire 1992).

Early research suggested that a major reason for the gender gap in political representation was that women were under-represented in the "social eligibility pool," in professions such as law and business that serve as stepping stones into politics. It was thought that, as women gained entry into these professions, they would also gain entry into politics. The social eligibility pool explanation does not, however, account for the recent plateauing of women's gains in proportional representation, as levels of women's participation in male-dominated professions continues to climb (Sanbonmatsu 2006).

A growing number of scholars now argue that the gender gap in political representation is the result of a confidence gap, which prevents women from entering political races as frequently as do men. Scholars now suggest that the story of women's under-representation in political office is a story of reluctance on the part of potential women candidates (Carroll 1994; Costantini 1990; Fox and Lawless 2011; Fulton et al 2006; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010). Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox (2005, 2010) have brought the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation to the forefront of gender and politics scholarship when they published results from their Citizen Ambition Study. Surveying men and women in traditional pipeline professions to political office, Lawless and Fox argued that women are under-represented in U.S. political office because of gender differences in political ambition. According to Lawless and Fox, women don't win because women don't run, and women don't run because they have a confidence gap, which leads them to doubt their qualifications for office.

The reluctance explanation for women's under-representation in politics has several shortcomings, however, which I address in my dissertation. Firstly, researchers have largely sampled women and men in traditional pipeline professions to political office such as law and business. Drawing from these surveys, scholars have tended to overlook the distinct political paths of community activists, including many women of color, whose political involvement is an extension of their social movement participation. Secondly, by quantifying the "deciding to run" explanations of women leaders into survey categories, researchers have diminished our potential for understanding women's "deciding to run" accounts as storytelling practices in which women negotiate the disjunction between their political ambition and dominant gender values. I aim in this research to argue that the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation contains gaps and complexities to which scholars of gender and politics must attend. In the following sections, I discuss the theoretical perspectives that serve as the foundation for my research on storytelling and women's paths to public office.

Contributions of Feminist Sociology

Since the 1970's, feminist scholars have brought the developing ideas and consciousness emerging from the women's movement's second wave into the academy, challenging sociologists to reflect upon the ways that the discipline has silenced certain forms of knowledge while universalizing the experiences of privileged groups. As DeVault (1996:32) describes, "The aim of much feminist

research has been to "bring women in," that is, to find what has been ignored, censored, and suppressed, and to reveal both the diversity of actual women's lives and the ideological mechanisms that have made so many of those lives invisible." One of the cornerstones of feminist theory is the perspective that gender is not a biological, or even a fixed or immutable identity, but rather, is a categorization that is created through both macro level and micro level social processes. In other words, gender identities are socially-constructed rather than biologically determined, and these categories are imbedded in the overarching institutions that play central organizing roles in our lives (Acker 1990, 2006; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Feminist scholars are concerned with understanding the processes by which gender is shaped through social structures and interpersonal interaction; as well as how gender inequality is reinforced through these processes. This scholarship seeks, not only to put the voices of women and other marginalized groups at the center of sociological analysis, but also to illuminate the process by which gendered discourses, institutions, and overarching structures shape the lives of both women and men.

Though political scientists have developed a large body of literature seeking to explain gender inequality in the political sphere, the theoretical perspectives undergirding this literature have been rooted in the gender roles perspective, which has been challenged by feminist sociologists for several decades now. The gender roles perspective roots the center of gender dynamics in family socialization and limits our understanding of gendered processes to internalized value judgments about one's competence and one's level of commitment to family obligations. Richard Fox

and Jennifer Lawless (2011:70) for example, identify women's internalization of traditional gender roles as a central factor contributing to women's persistent inequality in electoral politics when they state:

> Our findings strongly suggest that traditional gender role socialization continues to perpetuate a culture in which women remain unaccustomed to entering the electoral arena. Women's lower self-assessments of their political skills are consistent with a political culture that has not embraced women in the public sphere. In addition, women's perceptions of their politically relevant traits reflect a heightened level of discomfort with entering politics, also a likely result of traditional gender role orientations that discourage women's candidacies.

In keeping with the gender roles approach, researchers have cited women's family obligations and, more recently, women's lack of confidence in their political abilities as the primary explanations for women's under-representation in political office. These explanations have too often left unexamined the multiple processes through which women are alienated from the political sphere, are left to shoulder the majority of care-giving responsibilities, and are compelled to justify their behavior if they do seek a place in politics. The fact that the majority of research in the field of women in politics has been based on quantitative surveys has contributed to our over-reliance on the gender roles perspective. In quantitative research, gender continues to

be operationalized as a variable distinctly separate from other characteristics and structural forces.

Several sociological theories have replaced the gender roles approach, and these perspectives can help to illuminate politics as a gendered system within which men and women are held accountable to perform in specific ways and experience varying rewards and punishments for their gendered performances. In the proceeding sections, I discuss the following theoretical approaches: doing gender, gendered institutions, and intersectionality and how these sociological perspectives can help us to move beyond the gender roles approach still dominant in political science.

Doing Gender

Rooted in the gender roles perspective, scholars have recognized that gender socialization plays a significant role in shaping levels of women's political ambition by lowering women's confidence in their leadership capacities, inflating men's confidence, and leaving women to shoulder the majority of household and care giving responsibilities (Fox and Lawless 2011; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010). But, researchers have yet to explore the ways in which gender norms, institutionalized in politics, shape how women express their interest in running for office and narrate their decisions whether or not to run. I argue that we can gain critical insights into the gendered dynamics underlying political ambition by examining political leaders' "deciding to run" accounts as identity performances that are shaped by the cultural context in which they are imbedded.

In contrast to quantitative research on gender and ambition, I take a symbolic interactionist approach to this subject to understand how and why women construct meanings that guide and justify their political behavior. Specifically, my research is rooted in the theory "doing gender" posed by West and Zimmerman (1987). Political scientists still more frequently than not use the terms "females and males" in their research on gender and ambition, reflecting research methods that quantify sex-gender categories as fixed, immutable identities. For some time now, feminist scholars have vocalized preference for the term "gender" rather than "sex," which gives nod to the roles, stereotypes, and life chances attached to one's biological sex. With their seminal work "Doing Gender," West and Zimmerman (1987) pushed the analysis of gender even further. Central to the theory of doing gender is the conceptualization of gender, not as fixed roles into which men and women are socialized, but as micro level performances that reproduce shared understandings of gender differences. These performances are continually shaped by positive and negative social reinforcements or what West and Zimmerman (1987) call "accountability rules." In short, West and Zimmerman argue that gender is something "we do" rather than something "we are."

The concept of doing gender has transformed the sociology of gender, compelling scholars to articulate the process by which gender and other identities are created and recreated through identity performances. Two other key concepts grew out of the "doing gender" theory, which will also play a role in my analysis of women's "deciding to run" accounts. West and Finstermaker (1995) posed the

concept "doing difference" in order to account for race and class in identity performances. I will discuss race and class implications for gender analyses in the section on intersectionality. In addition, Judith Butler (2004) introduced the concept "undoing gender" to account for behavior that challenges conventional gender scripts. The concept "undoing gender was reconceptualized by Deutsch (2007) and as Risman (2009) argues, "undoing gender" is a concept that can further our understanding of how gender scripts are challenged and altered by individual and collective agency.

The "Doing gender" perspective is useful in helping us to understand women's "deciding to run" accounts as shaped, not just by gender socialization and gender roles, but by the ways in which men and women perform in accordance with, or in defiance of, accountability rules.

Too often in the political science literature, researchers have regarded subjects' responses to survey questions about their ambition for political office as proximate measures of reality rather than identity performances (Maines 1993). When researchers survey women and men asking about their inclination toward running for office, what we receive in return is a form of the subject's presentation of self. These responses likely do not accurately reflect the complexities of women's and men's drive for political office. Yet, too often, subject responses have been treated as objective measures of ambition rather than gendered performances imbedded within cultural contexts. This has held true, even when contradictions are revealed between subjects' stated ambition and their political behavior. For example,

while Sarah Fulton and others (2006) found that women legislators were less likely to express ambition to run for a Congressional seat, they found that women were just as likely to actually run for a Congressional seat than men. Rather than acknowledging that subjects' presentation of ambition is shaped by gendered expectations, the authors assert that "This apparent puzzle is solved by the finding that the expected benefit of office mediates the relationship between ambition and the likelihood of running" (Fulton et al 2006:435).

Thus far, political scientists have analyzed women's expressed lower levels of ambition as rooted in gender socialization that causes women to doubt their qualifications for office-holding. In this research, I seek to add a new layer to this understanding by examining women's "deciding to run" accounts as gender performances constructed in accountability with, or in defiance of, cultural accountability scripts. I do not dismiss the perspective that gender socialization plays a role in limiting women's confidence in their political capabilities and inflating men's self-assessments. I do, however, argue that the stories we as researchers elicit from our subjects are identity performances that can reproduce and challenge conventional gender scripts. The performance aspect of these accounts is a dimension that needs to be examined in order to understand the gendered dynamics shaping political representation.

Gendered Institutions

"Gendered institutions" is another theoretical perspective that has challenged the gender roles approach over the last twenty years. Scholars working from this perspective emphasize that, far from being limited to interpersonal interaction, gendered values and behaviors are imbedded in organizations and larger social institutions, reifying gender categories and reproducing gender inequality (Acker 1990, 1992, 2006). According to Joan Acker, who led the theoretical movement toward this perspective, "The term 'gendered institutions' means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life" (1992:567). Drawing from cultural values prescribing gender differences between men and women, the overt practices and covert meanings associated with formal organizations and broader social institutions are deeply organized according to race, class, and gender categories (Acker 2006; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). Through this process, jobs, occupations, and even entire institutions are gender typed, and the scripts, values, and rewards associated with these are distributed along gendered lines (Acker 2006; Ridgeway and Correll 2004).

There is arguably no other American institution more strongly gender-typed masculine than formal politics. Cultural discourses define competent leadership in masculine terms, privileging characteristics such as assertiveness, competitiveness, rationality, and a take-charge capacity that are synonymous with gendered expectations for men's proper characteristics and behavior. Furthermore, the common discourses used to discuss Presidential elections, including the "test of

executive toughness," the "preference for military heroes," and "the sports and war metaphors in debates" contribute to the masculinization of political positions (Duerst-Lahti 2006). In fact, Georgia Duerst-Lahti (2006:23) argues that "…because the institution is itself perceived as masculine, contests for the presidency are, among other things, struggles over dominant or hegemonic masculinity."

These masculinized political discourses are no accident according to gender political theorists. Gretchen Ritter (2008) argues that gender is a "core problematic" in the development of American democracy, as it has been central to the formation of American government and public policies. In addition, gendered ideologies have shaped the ways in which we have conceptualized democracy. As Ritter (2008:26) argues: "Gender has given important meaning to our core governing ideologies -the norms that ground our constitutional order, the ideals that animate our democratic aspirations, and the beliefs that shape our understanding of the national interest and the general welfare."

Eileen McDonagh (2009) argues that we have adopted these masculinized political discourses because the U.S. has a laggard welfare state compared to other advanced countries. While other democratic countries combine liberal policies of equality with strong domestic programs, the U.S. government is overly-masculinized, saturated with liberal policies basing fairness on a standard of sameness to men and focusing the vast majority of resources on defense rather than social welfare. This imbalance in public policy and governmental structures foster political discourses that

encourage the polity to value competent leadership in masculine terms. As McDonagh (2009:23) explains:

> Failure to assign maternal traits to the government produces a political context that by default leaves maternalism located solely in spheres outside the state, such as the home, the market's service sector, or private charitable institutions. Consequently, people who are viewed as having maternal traits, such as women, also are relegated to realms outside the state.

Occupations that are gender-typed masculine pose arduous barriers for women attempting to open their doors. Women often find the cultures and values imbedded in these institutions difficult to negotiate and are often penalized for exhibiting the very masculinized behavior scripted to be critical for success within these institutions. Women seeking to build careers as political leaders face unique hurdles, as the competition for party favor and election to office has an intensely public quality. As Bledsoe and Herring (1990:213) aptly noted some twenty years ago: "Electoral competition not only produces winners and losers but shows an exact final score for all to witness." Furthermore, in contrast to sports and entertainment competitions, politics is the only arena in which men and women compete directly with each other."

As is the case with other masculinized professions, women are more likely to negatively assess their qualifications for office than men (Fox and Lawless 2011; Ridgeway and Correll 2004), are less likely to be recruited by party elites to run for

office (Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010; Ridgeway and Correll 2004), and lag in confidence in their ability to perform competently within the profession (Fox and Lawless 2011), an assessment Cech et al (2011) term "professional role confidence."

While scholars of women and politics have documented women's diminished confidence in their political abilities, we have often neglected to interrogate how masculinized political institutions shape women's self-perceptions and desire to participate in politics and how alternative political cultures might contribute to a healthier democratic system. Research has too often analyzed whether or not women are emotionally suited for politics rather than problematizing the over-valuing of masculine forms of leadership and political competence or envisioning possibilities for political life that would be more inclusive of women and perhaps more effective as a whole. For this reason, Gretchen Ritter (2007) argues that scholars studying contemporary women in politics should draw from historians and scholars of political development to foster more complex and nuanced understandings of gender.

The concept of political ambition central to my research has been defined in lockstep with the masculinized political ethos that shapes American politics. Scholars have made several problematic assumptions about political ambition, that political ambition as an autonomous pursuit of political power, that actors are driven by self-interested motives, and that this form of ambition is critical to a dynamic democratic system. As Joseph Schlesinger proclaimed in his seminal book on political ambition, "Ambition lies at the heart of politics. Politics thrives on the hope for preferment and

the drive for office" (1966:1). I will attend to these dynamics throughout this work, interrogating wherever possible the masculinized assumptions that undergird our understanding of political ambition, leadership, and political processes.

Intersectionality

My dissertation research is shaped by intersection theory, a paradigm that prioritizes examination of the complex ways in which interlocking forms of oppression shape people's life chances and identities. Since the term "intersectionality" was first coined by legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1991), a prolific body of literature has emerged that challenges us to consider and integrate the perspectives of marginalized groups of women in feminist discourse. Similar to the critiques of androcentricism feminist scholars had leveled against their disciplines, intersectional theorists argued that, under the guise of universality, the experiences and priorities of white, middle class women had too often been taken as the norm for all women, and the experiences and consciousness of women of color in the U.S. and women outside of the Western world had largely remained unrecognized and unexamined (Hill Collins 2000; Mohanty 1988). By deploying intersectionality frameworks, feminist scholars have largely succeeded in bringing the voices of marginalized women to the center of feminist analysis (Davis 2008). In fact, Leslie McCall (2005:1771) argues that "Intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far."

The central tenet of intersectionality is the understanding that categories of oppression, including race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are not discreet, but rather, interact to create unique systems of oppression. Patricia Hill Collins (2000) uses the term "matrix of domination" to refer to the intersections of categories of oppression. According to this model, women will experience gender oppression differently and to varying degrees depending on how gender intersects with race, class, sexual orientation, disability and other categories of social organization in their lives.

Though the intersectionality paradigm has transformed feminist research over the last few decades, feminist scholars have not been as successful in integrating intersectionality frameworks into other social science fields (Choo and Ferree 2010). This is particularly true for the discipline of political science, which has been the home of most research on gender and politics. As Evelyn Simien (2007:264) asserts: "Political scientists, as compared to scholars of other disciplines, have paid far less attention to the ways in which race and gender operate in tandem to produce and maintain the unequal distribution of power and privilege in the American political system."

Political scientists have developed two voluminous bodies of literature on racial and gender inequality in political representation. These literatures have, however, overlooked the intersecting and interlocking dynamics propelling racial and gender inequality (Garcia Bedolla 2007). Despite the tremendous growth in research

on gender and politics that has developed over the last two decades, we still know relatively little about the experiences of women of color in political life.

As with other theories in the gender and politics literature, the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation continues to reflect the precarious assumption that the experiences and political trajectories of white women are universal to all groups of women in the U.S. In fact, the reluctance explanation fails to account for one of the most interesting dynamics in political representation today; that is, by many accounts women of color have a better success record in seeking and winning elective office than both white women and minority men. The 1965 Voting Rights Act and the subsequent establishment of majority-minority districts created spaces for the increased representation of racial and ethnic minority groups. By taking advantage of these new opportunities to run for office, women of color have played an important role in increasing levels of representation for both minority groups and women. In fact, women of color account for the majority of gains in office-holding for women, Blacks, and Latinos over the last few decades (Hardy-Fanta et al 2006; Smooth 2006B). African-American women and Latinas have a success record in winning election to office on the state level which surpasses that of both white women and minority men (Junn and Brown 2008; Scola 2006; Simien 2006, Smooth 2006A). In addition, women of color hold larger proportions of the seats held by their respective racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. Congress and in state legislatures than the proportion held by white women (Garcia Bedolla et al 2005; Hardy-Fanta et al 2006). The success record of women of color in seeking and

winning elective office is particularly notable, given that these groups generally have lower rates of political participation compared to whites (Smooth 2006A). Jensen and Martinek (2009) suggest that ambition might play an important role in shaping these patterns, as they find that African-American women judges in Texas expressed ambition levels that were six times higher than those of the white men they surveyed. Since the success record of Black women and Latinas in winning elective office defy additive models of oppression, an intersectional framework is necessary to make sense of the dynamics underlying these patterns.

Part of the reason that the experiences and political paths of women of color are not accounted for in current discussions of the candidate emergence process is that the majority of women included in studies on candidate emergence have been white women from professions such as law and business, which have been regarded as the stepping stones into elected office. For example, Lawless and Fox (2005, 2010) defined "potential candidates" for their Citizen Political Ambition Study as men and women who have backgrounds in law, business, education, or political activism. These categories can exclude women with backgrounds in community activism who are not necessarily involved in party politics. Available evidence suggests that women who identify as community activists express higher levels of political ambition than those from traditional pipeline professions to public office for whom researchers have tended to focus (Moore 2005). Furthermore, evidence also suggests that Black women's and Latinas' racial/ethnic collective identities and community activism has been a catalyst for political participation and has provided an

important avenue into electoral politics (Jaramillo 2010; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Moore 2005; Prindeville 2004).

The intersectionality framework is not without its critiques. Challenges primarily center around the vagueness of intersectional analyses (Conaghan 2009; Davis 2008). While the intersectionality framework has primarily been used to illuminate the experiences of women of color and other groups who experience multiple forms of marginality, scholars of intersectionality often fall short of deeper analyses of the processes and interacting institutions that generate and support inequalities (Choo and Ferree 2010). Furthermore, by taking the necessary step of attending to women who experience multiple forms of marginality, intersectional research has too often left unexamined the unmarked categories of those who occupy positions of privilege. Feminist theorists call us to use the intersectional framework to unpack the dynamics of privilege, even as we continue to seek to understand the workings of oppression (Choo and Ferree 2010; Garcia Bedolla 2007); Hancock 2007; Harding and Norberg 2005). I attend to these criticisms of intersectionality in the chapters to follow. It is my hope that deploying an intersectionality framework in my research will shed light on the experiences and strategies of women from all racial and economic backgrounds seeking to carve a place for themselves in the political sphere.

Narrative Analysis

My research also differs sharply from the current literature on women's representation in that I use narrative analysis to uncover complexities in women's political storytelling that are masked by our over-reliance on quantitative surveys.

Narrative analysis is grounded in the theoretical tradition of symbolic interactionism. Scholars in this tradition are concerned with the ways people engage in meaning-making in their everyday lives through their interactions with others. Symbolic interactionists regard human behavior, not as unthinking responses to environmental stimuli, but as reflexive identity performances (Callero 2003; Stryker 2008). In his seminal work *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, for example, Erving Goffman (1959) proposed analyzing human behavior as analogous to a dramaturgical performance, as actors alter their behavior to elicit thoughts, feelings, and respect from their audience.

Rooted in the perspective of symbolic interactionism, I use narrative analysis to examine the "deciding to run" accounts of women leaders. Over the last four decades, scholars in increasing numbers have begun to recognize storytelling as a cultural practice worthy of systematic inquiry and narrative analysis as a legitimate research method (Berger and Quinney 2005; Pierce 2003; Riessman 2008). The "narrative turn" in literature, legal studies, and the social sciences was energized by the Civil Rights and feminist movements of the 1960's, which emphasized storytelling as a way to facilitate the cultivation of political consciousness and collective identities (Pierce 2003). Scholars committed to giving voice to

marginalized groups through critical analyses also increasingly turned to narrative analysis as an alternative to positivist approaches and to place the voices of marginalized peoples at the center of their work (Maines 1996; Patterson and Renwick Monroe 1998, Pierce 2003). Feminist scholars have been particularly interested in narrative analysis as a way to introduce women-centered approaches into traditional social science fields. As Jennifer Pierce (2003:307) explains: "In contrast to positivist traditions of thought, feminism emphasized reflexivity, sought out voices that spoke from alternative realities, and took those voices seriously without dismissing them as mere subjectivity."

There is general agreement that narratives contain three essential features. Firstly, narratives contain a selected group of details and events involving an individual or group as the central actor (Patterson and Renwick Monroe 1998; Riessman 2008). Secondly, these events are temporally ordered into a plot (Polkinghorne 1988; Polletta 2006, 2011). Finally, narratives are typically told to justify a seemingly abnormal behavior, to make meaning out of experience, or to impart an underlying moral message (Chase 1995; Ewick and Silbey 1995; Orbuch 1997; Polletta 1998A, 2006; Riessman 2008). Yet, these underlying justifications and moral messages are not usually made explicit, but are often left to be interpreted by their audience (Polletta et al 2011).

Feminists and other critical scholars have been drawn to narratives for their potential to emphasize the power of individual and collective agency to resist

oppression and to bring about social change (Patterson and Renwick Monroe 1998). Yet, scholars are also increasingly interested in analyzing storytelling as a performance practice in which the performer draws from, contests, and is constrained by her cultural context (Chase 1995; Ewick and Silbey 1995, Pierce 2003; Riessman 2008). As Molly Patterson and Kristen Renwick Monroe (1998:315) observe, "The stories we tell are profoundly influenced by what is possible and what is valued within our culture."

Central to narrative inquiry, then, is close attention to the social and cultural context within which stories are created. Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein (2009) call these contexts "narrative realities." In order to understand the storytelling performances of women political leaders, we must attend to the gendered narrative reality of the political sphere. In other words, we must understand the gendered political structures and cultural discourses that women must negotiate as they construct their public personas.

Discourses prescribing the different characteristics and roles and justifying the unequal life chances of men and women abound in U.S. society. As Susan Chase (1995:7) explains: "Western culture's metanarratives about women—as communicated through literature, popular culture, the natural and social sciences-emphasize women's selflessness, orientation to and development through others, and preoccupation with family and domestic affairs."

This narrative reality creates what Chase (1995) calls a "discursive disjunction" for women interested in running for office. On the one hand, women leaders must demonstrate masculine characteristics in order to be recognized as viable candidates. On the other hand, these women are required to present themselves in ways that do not challenge hegemonic discourses about women's selfless and self-effacing character. Chase (1995) argues that, in the face of such discursive disjunctions, storytellers employ "narrative strategies" to account for these inconsistencies. What forms these narrative strategies might take for women political leaders is the subject of my research.

Scholars have not always recognized, however, that these gendered discourses are also deeply raced. Historically, white women have negotiated standards of femininity that call them to operate within strict boundaries of the private sphere (Nakano Glenn 2002). Standards of feminine goodness also mandated that Latinas be the providers of domestic tranquility for their husbands and children, though economic pressures often pushed Latinas into the public sphere as low-paid workers (Jaramillo 2010; Nakano Glenn 2002; Thornton Dill 1994). Due to their severe exploitation in the American labor market, Black women historically have experienced more fluid boundaries demarking the private and public spheres, performing both labor and community work alongside Black men (Hill Collins 2000; Nakano Glenn 2002; Thornton Dill 1994).

While white women have historically been prescribed roles adhering to the cult of domesticity, Black women were excluded from achieving the status of this femininity (Landry 2002). In fact, discourses reinforcing white femininity, which emphasized white women's submissiveness, frailty, and sexual and moral purity, were constructed in direct opposition to controlling images of black femininity, which emphasized Black women's capacity for hard labor and their sexual availability (Garcia Bedolla 2007; Hill Collins 2000). Black women faced high rates of labor and sexual exploitation as the result of being denied "femininity," according to white standards. The Black community, however, developed strikingly different standards for feminine goodness, which minimized the distinctions between the private and public spheres (Landry 2002).

These discursive legacies have generated what Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007, 2009) refers to as raced standards of feminine goodness, ranging from expectations of modesty, passivity, and selflessness for white women to expectations of strength, selflessness, and an extraordinary capacity to endure for Black women. Though Latinas have important legacies of political action (Hardy-Fanta 1993), they have carved this place for themselves in the public sphere in resistance to feminine expectations of modesty and selfless devotion to their families. Despite these different discursive legacies, very few women were able to seek and win election to public office until the 1970's. Now that more formal barriers to women's political participation have been removed, these discursive legacies may play an important role in shaping the narrative strategies of women candidates and potential candidates.

Becoming Social Movement Insiders

The women's and racial/ethnic movements of the last century made equal political representation a top priority, and recent gains in the representation of white women, African-Americans, and Latina/os have come as a direct result of the work of these movements. Yet, gender politics and social movements scholars remain strangely aloof. Current paradigms in these fields have not adequately accounted for the unique political trajectories, commitments, and discourses deployed by institutional activists, women who straddle the boundaries of social movements and the state (Santoro and McGuire 1997).

Gender and politics scholars have neglected the political trajectories of women activists, and social movement scholars have been equally reluctant to include these political actors in their analyses. Because the contentious politics model still dominant in social movement research has defined social movements in terms of their opposition to the state, many regard the presence of social movement actors within government institutions as evidence of the cooptation and eventual demise of a movement (McAdam 1982; Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Piven and Cloward 1979; Tarrow 1994). Scholars have tended to treat the state as a unified actor with fixed goals and interests (Goodwin and Jasper 2004). But, as Polletta (1998B:480) argues, "States are not monolithic entities; rather, they comprise numerous actors with overlapping, competing, and changing constituencies." While managing dual identities as activist and institutional insider does present unique conflicts that actors

must negotiate (Polletta 1998B, 2006), scholars have for too long overlooked the mobilization work performed within political institutions and the experiences, identities, and biographical trajectories of those performing this work (Katzenstein 1990, 1998). Political theorist Laurel Weldon (2011) argues that social movements provide an important form of representation for members of marginalized groups, as social movements solidify the interest agendas of under-represented groups and apply pressure on elected leaders to further these agendas.

Building on the new social movements field developed by European scholars, social movements research in the U.S. is now expanding beyond contentious politics to examine the cultural work that social movements perform inside and outside of mainstream institutions (Goodwin and Jasper 2004; Jasper 1999; Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Taylor 2008). Yet, even this cultural turn in social movements research often neglects the work of institutional activists and movement discourses more generally, as much of this research has assumed that the "cultural work" performed by social movements takes place outside of political institutions. As I will demonstrate, however, women have brought with them into the political sphere activist discourses that have shaped the narratives they construct as public figures.

Storytelling has played an important role in social movement formation and maintenance. Activists present counter-narratives, alternative stories about groups, their opponents and the root of social problems, to foster a sense of collective

identity, to recruit new members, and to encourage sacrifice among members. Women political leaders often carry these discourses into the realm of formal politics.

Social movements scholars have important contributions to make in the field of narrative analysis, as we are attune to how cultural discourses are challenged, transformed, but yet simultaneously reinforced, by social movement work. Rochon (2000) documents the discourses that have been incorporated into mainstream American culture as the result of the 1960's Civil Rights, women's, and environmental movements. Rochon argues that discourses are incorporated into the broader culture by a process of diffusion as ideas are formed within critical communities, are adopted and spread by social movements, and are finally integrated into public discourse. These counter-narratives are, however, constructed in reference to dominant cultural discourses (Benford and Snow 2000). While storytellers can play a role in changing discursive realities, they "must" draw from their culture's metanarratives in order to have cachet with their audience.

Social movements have reinforced, contested, and reshaped gender discourses in ways that present unique possibilities and predicaments for white, Latina, and Black women leaders attempting to construct their public personas. White women, Black women, and Latinas each have distinct traditions of activism around women's rights, poverty, and racial/ethnic equality (Blackwell 2011; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Roth 2004; Townsend Gilkes 1994). Conceptions of political leadership have traditionally been constructed in opposition to standards of white femininity, which named the

private sphere as women's domain. White women suffragists attempted to negotiate this disjunction by claiming that it was precisely women's roles as moral leaders and protectors of home and hearth that necessitated their participation in the political sphere. White feminists in the 1970's attempted to negotiate this disjunction by interrogating the cultural distinction between the gendered private and public spheres, arguing that private lives are political issues and attempting to eradicate cultural values prescribing different roles for women and men.

Women activists have founded multiple organizations to increase levels of women's political participation and to support feminist goals, especially securing reproductive rights. These organizations are highly professionalized and now play a prominent role in U.S. politics. In 1971, Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, Betty Friedan, and other feminist activists founded the National Women's Political Caucus to support women running for elected office and to further feminist goals such as securing reproductive rights, reducing the gender wage gap, and passing the Equal Rights Amendment.

In 1985, Ellen Malcolm, feminist activist and air to the IBM fortune, founded Emily's List, a multi-pronged organization and Political Action Committee (PAC) supporting Pro-Choice, Democratic women candidates for political office. "Emily" is an acronym which stands for "Early Money is Like Yeast." The organization recruits women to run for office, provides financial support and training to women candidates, and conducts initiatives to encourage women to vote for their endorsed candidates.

Emily's List is a formidable force in U.S. politics, supporting the election of 86 women to the U.S. House of Representatives, 16 women to the U.S. Senate, 9 women to governor's seats, and hundreds of women candidates to state and local offices (Emily's List 2011). Emily's List is one of the five PACs that has made the most contributions to U.S. elections over the last decade (Center for Responsive Politics 2011).

While white women activists in the New Left separated from men activists to form consciousness-raising groups and organizations we now think of as comprising feminism's second wave, Black women and Latinas remained deeply intertwined in the Civil Rights and Chicano movements (Roth 2004). These women often performed feminist activism within racial justice movements as they sought to challenge their movements' conceptualizations of gender, racial oppression, and leadership. Within the Chicano movement, feminists organized to challenge cultural depictions of women as the selfless mothers to revolutionaries and the patriarchal leadership structures that often resisted their leadership roles (Blackwell 2011; Roth 2004). Similarly, Black women resisted gender oppression within the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the movement discourses that called women to assume the role of silent helper to male revolutionaries. Discourses of the strong Black woman have been both evoked and contested by Black activists, creating unique opportunities as well as constraints for Black women (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2009; Mullings 1994). As I will demonstrate in the pages that follow, discourses emerging from these

activist traditions play an important role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of women leaders.

Overview of Dissertation

Using narrative analysis, and guided by a commitment to intersectionality, I will present findings from interviews with 46 women leaders in Texas in the pages that follow. In Chapter Two, I discuss my research design, as well as the methodology and ethical considerations that have guided my research. In Chapter Three, I present an overview of my findings from the interviews I conducted. Surprisingly, the majority of the women I interviewed expressed more confidence in their "deciding to run" accounts than the reluctance explanation predicts. I also discuss in Chapter Three the stories that did mirror the reluctance explanation. I examine the factors that contribute to these stories of reluctance, yet I also illuminate the complexities embedded in these accounts.

In Chapter Four, I examine the stories of women who express more confidence and self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts than the reluctance explanation predicts. I find that women's deployment of social movement discourses played the most important role in shaping the level of confidence expressed in their stories, but these movement discourses are also deeply shaped by raced-gendered discourses and the political context.

In Chapter Five, I present findings from the fieldwork I conducted in a Latina candidate's campaign for city council. I discuss how the candidate's expression of an

activist consciousness was cultivated through negotiations between the candidate, campaign staff, and even volunteers. I demonstrate how these actors shaped both the campaign message and voter mobilization efforts to maximize the candidate's viability in a challenging political context. Finally, in Chapter Six, I conclude my dissertation with a discussion of the contributions my research makes to our understanding of both storytelling and gender and politics. I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of my study and suggest future avenues for research.

CHAPTER TWO: Research Design

In this chapter, I discuss the feminist methodology that undergirds my research. I present my research design, describing how I obtained my sample of interview participants, how I conducted my fieldwork, and how I analyzed my data. I also discuss the strengths and limitations of my research design and the ethical considerations I faced while carrying out this study. Finally, I discuss the political landscape of the state of Texas, the setting of my research.

Methodology

One of the major aims of feminist scholarship has been to challenge positivist assumptions that objective, value-free research is both possible and desirable. As feminists have argued, positivist-oriented research, under the guise of objectivity, too often minimized the experiences and viewpoints of women and reduced research subjects to the mere sum of variables that could be manipulated. I take as a starting point for this research the recognition that all forms of knowledge are both political and situated. This recognition requires a commitment to making the standpoint of women from various locations of privilege central to my research, reflexivity about how my own standpoint shapes my research, and an analysis of the gendered structures and cultural discourses that shape the political sphere. This feminist epistemology is fully compatible with narrative analysis, as scholars of narrative also

take as a starting point of their research the recognition that knowledge is partial and grounded in local contexts (Polletta 2011).

Feminists are currently engaging in vigorous debates about the power of social categories. Post-modernist feminists argue that, as categories of gender, race, and others are socially constructed, scholars only help to reify these divisions by deploying these categories in their research. I take what McCall (2005) calls an intercategorical approach to this dilemma. While I acknowledge that these categories are socially constructed, I also recognize that these categories have critical consequences for the ways in which economic, political, and cultural power is distributed. I therefore use these categories in my research with the recognition that they are only important so far as our society has deemed them to be important.

Feminist methodology is guided by three major principles. These commitments are to put women's experiences at the center of research, to minimize potential harm to research subjects, and to produce research that forwards feminist goals of social change (DeVault 1996). I seek to accomplish the first by generating research that enables us to make sense of why women are still significantly under-represented in the political sphere. I will address the strategies I use to accomplish the latter two in my discussion of the ethical considerations of this research.

Study Design

Qualitative research methods are uniquely suited to help us understand the ambiguities imbedded in storytelling practices. In this research project, I rely on both

interviews with women leaders and four months of fieldwork in a candidate's city council campaign to analyze how women construct their "deciding to run" accounts. Conducting interviews with women leaders and political activists enabled me to obtain first-hand accounts of these leaders' "deciding to run" stories, which made interviewing an advantageous method compared to an analysis of campaign materials and media reports. Because I recognize, however, that these stories are not likely to be crafted solely by the storyteller herself, I thought it was also important to conduct fieldwork in a political campaign to understand both how a candidate's public persona is shaped by professionals working on her campaign and how these strategic decisions are limited by the political and cultural context.

The state of Texas was an optimal site to carry out this research for several reasons. Firstly, I was committed to insuring that a significant proportion of my sample be both women of color and women who came into politics through community activism. Both the population demographics of the state and the demographic make-up of the Texas legislature and the city councils of its urban centers meant that Texas was an ideal cite to carry out this research. I provide an overview of these demographics in the following section. Secondly, my proximity to the state capitol meant that I was able to conduct interviews with elected leaders, negotiating their last-minute schedule changes without enduring significant costs. Finally, I have some ties to the world of Texas politics. Some of the friends I had made as a student at the LBJ School of Public Affairs now work in politics, and I was also a regularly-attending member of a local organization of Democratic women and

serve on the City of Austin Commission for Women. The connections I made through these circles proved invaluable as I sought access to elected leaders.

Interview Sample

Between 2007 and 2010, I conducted 47 interviews for this project. Forty-six of my subjects were women who were active in Texas politics on the state and local levels, and one subject, the only man I interviewed for this project, held a leadership position in Annie's List, a PAC supporting Pro-Choice women candidates in Texas. Table 1 provides a summary of my subjects' pseudonyms and demographic information. Thirty-three of the women I interviewed have run for political office on the local or state level or both. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to these subjects as "candidates." Fifteen of these candidates were serving in the Texas legislature at the time of their interviews; two are former legislators, and one ran unsuccessfully for a legislative seat. Seven of these candidates were serving on city councils in urban cities around the state; one is a former city council member, and one recently ran unsuccessfully for a city council seat. Four of these candidates were serving on local governing bodies, including school boards and county commissions, and one ran unsuccessfully for a seat on a local judiciary. Finally, one of my subjects ran unsuccessfully for a seat on the state school board in the 1970's, a fact I did not discover until our interview. The remaining 13 subjects I interviewed, whom I refer to as "potential candidates," are either active in party politics or have assumed

leadership roles in their communities, but had not yet run for office at the time of the interviews.

I obtained my sample through several strategies. I began with requesting assistance from several contacts I had with staff of women candidates. I also sent e-mail requests to every woman serving in the state legislature and women serving on city councils of four of the five major urban areas in Texas. I was granted a number of interviews through this method. I then asked each of these participants to recommend other current, former, and potential candidates for office, and these subjects frequently provided me with contact information and even assisted me in arranging interviews with other women.

The potential candidates I interviewed were all residents of one urban center during the time of their interviews. I relied on my own knowledge of Democratic circles and community activists in the city to identify my initial subjects. As with the candidates I interviewed, I asked the potential candidates to identify and put me in contact with women for whom "they thought would be great candidates for public office."

Table 2 shows the break-down of my sample by race/ethnicity. My sample includes 19 white women, 13 Latinas, and 14 African-American women. Four of the potential candidates I interviewed identified themselves as being gay, and two identified themselves as being disabled. All but two of the women I interviewed are college-educated, and a sizeable number have earned graduate and professional

degrees. The women I interviewed come from various professional backgrounds, including law, business, education, healthcare, nonprofit management, and community organizing.

With only two exceptions, one candidate who chose not to disclose her party affiliation and one potential candidate who identified as a Republican, all of the women I interviewed identified as members of the Democratic Party. Initially, I sought participation from Republican women legislators, but my requests were denied by legislative staff in these offices. Scholars of narrative are sensitive to the ways in which researchers engage in the storytelling process with subjects. In this research, I found that the narratives we as researchers incorporate in our initial contact can shape whether or not potential subjects or their gatekeepers will choose to engage in narrative creation with us. In my initial e-mail request, I described my research as "examining women's paths to public office," I speculate that this language might have conjured "feminist" red flags for potential Republican subjects. The fact that I had no personal contacts with Republican legislative staff also likely contributed to my difficulty obtaining interviews with Republican women legislators. Furthermore, because most local political positions in Texas are non-partisan, I did not necessarily know the party affiliation of the local candidates for whom I requested interviews. All of the local candidates I interviewed, with the exception of the one city council member who chose not to reveal her party affiliation, were also Democrats. Finally, because I employed a snowball sampling method to obtain names of potential candidates, and all of my contacts were Democrats, all of the 13 potential candidates I

interviewed were also Democrats with only one exception. Republican women likely deploy unique narrative strategies of their own, but I will not be able to examine their narratives in this study.

I did not place restrictions on the ages of my subjects or the time period in which the candidates ran for office. Table 3 shows the first year in which the candidates I interviewed ran for their highest political position. Three of the women I interviewed are regarded as grandmothers in Texas politics, as they ran for their highest positions in the 1970's. One of these women still holds a position in the Texas legislature; one held her legislative seat well into the 1990's, and one ran unsuccessfully for the state school board. Seven of the legislators and two of the local elected leaders I interviewed were first elected to their positions in the 1990's. Five of the candidates I interviewed ran for office between 2000 and 2004. The majority of the women I interviewed, however, ran for their current positions between 2005 and 2008, including seven current legislators, seven current city council members, one city council candidate, and one local school board member. In fact, the timing of this research was ideal, as I was able to interview women legislators who had been elected to office during a period of relative success for Democratic women in key swing districts across the state. These successes were dashed, however, during the 2010 elections; in fact, seven of the women legislators I interviewed have since lost reelection, and one was forced to resign after being charged with ethics violations.

Only four of the women I interviewed have run for multiple elected positions. Three of these women were elected to the Texas House of Representatives after serving on their local school boards. One was elected to the Texas House after serving on the state school board.

I conducted the majority of the interviews in person, though nine of the interviews had to be conducted by telephone due to distance and subjects' scheduling limitations. Interviews took place in a location preferred by the subjects, including their offices and in local coffee shops and restaurants. Interviews were semi-structured; I followed a set of questions, but allowed the conversation to veer from these questions. I tape-recorded interviews and transcribed the interviews afterward.

Fieldwork

Between January and May of 2009, I conducted fieldwork as a participant observer in a Latina candidate's campaign for city council. After interviewing Ana Estrada just before she officially announced her candidacy, I decided that her campaign afforded me a unique opportunity to see first-hand how the public personas of candidates are cultivated during campaigns. In Chapter Five, I describe in detail the political context of Hamilton, the city in which the campaign took place.

I was an active volunteer in the campaign, spending two to three days a week at the headquarters. I made several hundred phone calls per week for the campaign. I was also asked to answer detailed endorsement questionnaires on behalf of the

candidate. I frequently attended campaign events, including the kickoff and Election Day events, candidate forums, and fundraisers.

The nature of the volunteer work I was performing as part of the campaign did not afford me the opportunity to take notes while I was serving as a volunteer. I therefore took notes after each volunteer session, attempting to reconstruct conversations I had overheard and/or participated in as accurately as possible. I did, however, have access to electronic copies of the questionnaires and calling scripts we used during the campaign, which I also included in my field notes.

Data Analysis

Researchers have developed a variety of approaches to analyze the narrative data they collect. A thematic approach focuses on uncovering commonalities among stories. In this approach, excerpts from a larger sample of narratives are presented to illustrate common themes across a given sample of subjects (Riessman 2008). The sociolinguistic approach focuses on the form that language sequences take, closely examining, not just what a subject says, but how she says it (Riessman 2008). Finally, the dialogic approach emphasizes the researcher as a fully active participant in the creation of the subjects' narrative. In contrast to other approaches, which leave the role of the researcher in the background, scholars adopting this approach examine how the researcher works to shape the subject's narrative (Riessman 2008). I use the thematic approach in this research project. In my analysis, I provide more concise excerpts from interviews in order to illustrate commonalities and differences in my

subjects' narratives. I focus more on the content of my subjects' stories than the language patterns embedded in these stories. Furthermore, I will not provide a deeper analysis of how I, as a researcher, helped to construct these narratives.

During my first stage of analysis, I coded my data according to major themes I observed. One of the most interesting stories that emerged in this first stage of analysis was that a significant proportion of my subjects told stories that were in striking contrast to the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation, and few of the narratives I heard precisely mirrored the reluctance story. I began to consider the forces that might be shaping these discrepancies. In many ways, my struggle to make sense of the complexities in my data helped me to draw what I believe are my most significant conclusions. I first organized my data by the level of self-efficacy my subjects expressed in their "deciding to run" stories. I then analyzed the demographic characteristics of these groups to try to make sense of the differences in their stories. Analyzing the differences between my subjects' accounts, I then decided to consider community activism and collective identity as another important force shaping these stories. I then analyzed my data again with an eye toward identifying themes of community activism and expressions of collective identity with any marginalized groups. I discuss my conclusions from this analysis in Chapters Three and Four.

I was drawn to narrative analysis as I sought a way to understand the ambiguities I recognized in many of my subjects' accounts. Though I do categorize

my subjects' stories to analyze the themes that emerge, I also was concerned not to minimize the ambiguities I saw in these stories. It was in thinking through these complexities that I came to the understanding that these accounts were, in fact, identity performances that were as much shaped by my subjects' attempt to use discourses from their institutional and political contexts to negotiate this narrative disjunction than they revealed about women's ambition for office. In my last round of data analysis, I analyze these interviews to identify places where subjects' stories were ambiguous, where subjects' omitted information in their initial stories that they later revealed, or where subjects broader statements did not mirror their personal accounts.

My process for analyzing notes from my fieldwork was slightly different. Not knowing exactly what story I was interested in telling at first, I took extensive field notes after every volunteer session. After about a month of fieldwork, however, I developed a strong sense that I wanted to understand how the candidate's public identity as a woman and as a member of the Latina/o community was negotiated by the candidate and the campaign. This analysis required attention to both the candidate's public message and the behind-the-scenes negotiations that took place to cultivate this message. It also required attention to the campaign's mobilization strategy, understanding which groups the campaign targeted for voter outreach efforts, and the messages the campaign used for mobilizing these groups. To capture the campaign's message, I rely on data from speeches the candidate gave at candidate forums and other campaign events, material produced and distributed by the

campaign, and answers to questionnaires staff generated on behalf of the candidate. To capture the campaign's mobilization strategy, I rely on data I gathered while actively participating in the campaign's mobilization efforts. Through my weekly calling assignments, I was able to learn which groups were targeted for mobilization efforts, as well as the messages delivered to these groups. Finally, my presence at the campaign headquarters and later at the phone banking office for GOTV efforts afforded me the opportunity to be witness to important conversations, and perhaps more importantly, conflicts that occurred between campaign staff. Being present for these moments gave me better insight into the critical substantive decisions being made than interviews could reveal.

Ethical Considerations

As feminist methodology requires thoughtful commitment to minimize potential harm to our subjects, I discuss some of the measures I took to protect my subjects from any harm that might result from their participation in my research or from my participation in their worlds. I guaranteed confidentiality for the subjects I interviewed who were not elected officials and who had never run for office. Guaranteeing confidentiality is not feasible for elected leaders and candidates for office, however, as small details about their lives and careers can reveal the identities of those who lead public lives. I informed each of the elected leaders and candidates that they should expect that their names would be associated with statements they gave during the interviews. To demonstrate a good faith effort to disguise their

identities, however, I do assign pseudonyms to the subjects I discuss. Since I was, in fact, interested in these women's "public stories," not guaranteeing confidentiality was of little consequence to my project. I did not seek out deeply personal information or try to elicit "back stage" responses from my subjects (Goffman 1959). I was interested in the "front stage" personas of these women, and for the most part, this is what they provided me.

Issues of confidentiality were much more critical to my fieldwork on the political campaign. Because I was privy to some "back stage" information about campaign strategies, I sought to insure that I conducted myself with the highest ethical standards. I informed the candidate and all of the campaign staff that I was conducting this research for my dissertation, and I reminded these actors of this as the months went on. In order to protect the privacy of the participants I discuss, I have changed all proper names and descriptive information not deemed to be pertinent to the data.

Scholars of narrative are reflexive about how the storytelling power of the researcher can silence marginalized voices. Through our questions and responses during interviews, we help to construct subjects' narrative accounts (Riessman 2008). And ultimately it is the researcher who interprets and presents subject narratives to the academic audience, creating narratives of our own (Chase 1995). Throughout the research, I was committed to remaining reflexive about my own standpoint and those of the women I interviewed. I remained cognizant of how my own background and

identity could be both a strength and a limitation as I conducted these interviews. As a white, well-educated researcher, I recognize that my experiences and viewpoints were likely different from some of my subjects. I was committed to remaining open to allow room for stories to emerge that a structured interview questionnaire would not have captured. And even for those whose race and class identities mirror my own, I also recognize that narrative analysis requires disciplined attention to the stories that most resonate with ours, as we can too easily let taken-for-granted discourses cloud our understanding of narrative performances.

As researchers in the field, we aim to gain as much access to our subjects as possible, recognizing that our own identities shape our access, as well as our perceptions of the data we collect and analyze. My time in the field was deeply shaped by my identity as a middle class white woman. As I will discuss in Chapter Five, volunteers were given assignments based on our racial identities, and the work I was assigned to do had an impact on the data I collected. For example, during the campaign's Get Out the Vote efforts, I was assigned to make calls primarily to white, middle class women. Latina volunteers were assigned to work the Hispanic phone list in a different location. I tried to remain cognizant of my race and class identity throughout my field work and analysis. Despite my conscious attempts to be reflexive about how my identity as a middle class white woman shaped my perceptions as a researcher, I recognize that my data and analysis remain intertwined with my racial, gender, and class identity.

My role as a volunteer in the campaign also shaped my access to data. One roadblock I faced was that I was denied access to campaign staff meetings. I approached the candidate during the first week of the campaign to gain permission to observe these meetings, and she was agreeable to the proposal. The campaign manager, however, ultimately denied access. So as not to jeopardize my relationship with key players in the story I was trying to understand, I did not push the issue. I did, however, establish myself as a regular volunteer who was regarded with the level of trust afforded the campaign interns. Given that this was a campaign with a relatively small budget and few paid staff, my role as a regular volunteer provided me with the opportunity to interact with staff on a regular basis and gain valuable insights into the ways that the candidate's public persona was managed.

Strengths and Limitations

Both feminist and narrative epistemologies view knowledge as always partial and situated. I would, therefore, like to share some of the strengths and limitations posed by my research design. Firstly, deploying snowball sampling techniques rather than random sampling enabled me to obtain a diverse sample of women leaders; such diversity would not be possible with random sampling techniques designed to achieve generalizeability. Furthermore, my sample of 46 participants is small compared to that found in quantitative research; this enabled me to interpret the interviews in their entirety as opposed to a variable-centered approach. In short, the strength in my findings do not lie in their generalizeability. Rather, the strength in my findings lie in

my attention to the particulars of the context and to the complexities imbedded in my participants' "deciding to run" stories.

One of the strengths of my research is that my connections with women who are active in politics gave me unique access to elites, who are usually difficult to interview. Nevertheless, the fact that most of the women I interviewed were elites posed some limitations for me. Firstly, conducting interviews by telephone was not ideal, and I noticed great differences in my ability to move from my interview schedule to a conversational style during these interviews. Telephone interviews were, however, my only way to interview these women, as some preferred to speak when they were in their home districts after the legislative session ended, and travel limitations prevented me from interviewing these legislators and the local city council members outside of Austin. While this was no doubt a limitation, it was not as much of a barrier as it would pose in other research contexts, as these women generally provided me with cultivated messages that were just as easily delivered over the phone.

Another limitation I encountered in interviewing elites is their time restrictions. While my interviews with former legislators, unsuccessful candidates, and potential candidates generally lasted 45 minutes, my interviews with legislators were as short as fifteen minutes. Furthermore, narrative scholars generally claim that two meetings is advisable, but this was not possible with the sample of elites I was interviewing. Despite these limitations, I was able to gather some quite informative

data and provide a unique analysis of the forces shaping the "deciding to run" stories of women leaders.

Texas: The Narrative Reality

The state of Texas, with its rich context of racial and ethnic diversity, as well as being the site of struggle to open spaces for equal participation in political life, was a prime location in which my research questions could be explored. With a population of over 25 million, Texas is the second most populous state in the U.S., only surpassed by California (U.S. Census 2011). Though Texas is known for its distinct rural areas, the majority of the state's residents live in urban centers. Due to its unique location, Texas history and culture reflect elements from The South and the Southwest.

Texas is one of four majority-minority states in the U.S. White, non-Hispanic residents comprise 45.3 percent of the state's population, while residents of Hispanic or Latino origin make up 37.6 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). White residents of all ethnicities make up 70.4 percent of the state's population; Black residents comprise 11.8 percent of the population, and Asian-Americans make up just 3.8 percent of the population (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

Despite the fact that Texas leads the nation in industries including agriculture, information technology, and energy and boasts the second highest state gross domestic product in the country (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis 2011), the state contends with troubling statistics on the well-being of its less privileged residents.

Texas holds one of the highest income gaps between its rich and modest earners (Bernstein McNichol and Nicholas 2008) and holds the distinction of having the highest rate of uninsured residents at 23.8% (DeLuna Castro and Deviney 2010). Texas also has the 8th highest poverty rate in the U.S. at 17.2% and the 6th highest rate of child poverty; almost one in four Texan children lives below the poverty line (DeLuna Castro and Deviney 2010).

Texas politics is deeply shaped by the state's conservative political culture, as well as the state's history of political oppression of Blacks, Latinos, and poor whites, and the civil rights movement and subsequent legislation and court rulings mandating open doors for the political participation of these marginalized groups. The Democratic Party held a monopoly on state politics throughout the early twentieth century. Until the 1970's, the Democratic Party in Texas adhered to a conservative ideology. Poll taxes and white primaries kept racial minorities and poor whites from casting votes in elections (Texas Politics Project 2010).

The world of Texas politics has undergone seismic earthquakes since the 1960's as federal laws and Supreme Court rulings were handed down to open spaces for the adequate representation of Black and Latino voters. In addition to outlawing poll taxes and other voting barriers for minority groups, these new laws and court decisions outlawed the practice of Gerrymandering that white leaders had used to insure white voters had sizeable voting blocks in every district, preventing minorities from electing representatives from their communities. In addition, a series of court

cases led to the abolishment of many at-large electoral systems that had also prohibited blacks and Latinos from electing minority representatives. Majority-minority districts were drawn for state and national representation, which insured that blacks and Latinos made up sizeable voting blocks in at least some districts. In addition, local at-large systems were increasingly replaced with single-member districts, which provided for better representation of minority communities. These changes paved the way for a substantial increase in representation of African-Americans and Latinos since the 1970's (Texas Politics Project 2010).

The political upheaval of the 1960's also opened doors for the increased representation of women in Texas. Because barriers to women's participation in formal politics had been so steep, Black, Latina, and white women organized to find alternative means of exerting political influence. In fact, due to shrewd political maneuvering on the part of women's rights activists, Texas was the first state in the South to ratify the 19th Amendment (Jones and Winegarten 2000). While some groups of women worked to build coalitions in support of women's rights and racial justice, white women also played prominent roles in efforts to preserve segregation (Jones and Winegarten 2000).

Despite major obstacles, a number of prominent Texas women succeeded in carving places for themselves in state politics. In fact, women leaders from Texas hold several "firsts" in U.S. history. Annie Webb Blanton became the first woman elected to a statewide political office in 1918, when she was elected state superintendent of

schools (Ruthe Winegarten Foundation 2011). In 1924, Miriam (Ma) Ferguson was the first woman elected governor in the U.S., and Ann Richards also served one term as governor from 1991-1994 (Ruthe Winegarten 2011). Frances (Sissy) Farenthold was the first woman to make a viable bid for the Vice-Presidential nomination by a major party, being narrowly defeated for nomination in 1972 (Ruthe Winegarten Foundation 2011). In 1972, Barbara Jordan became the first African-American to serve as a Texas Representative to the U.S. Congress and the first African-American woman from the South to serve as a Congressional Representative. She was also the first woman and the first African-American to deliver the keynote address before a major political party's national convention in 1976 (Ruthe Winegarten Foundation 2011).

It was not until the 1970's, however, that the road paved by these pioneers enabled women to become a force to be reckoned with in Texas politics. In 1972, Texas voters elected six women to the state legislature, a milestone for women's representation in the state (Jones and Winegarten 2000). This class of legislators included Sarah Weddington, the attorney who successfully argued the Roe V. Wade Supreme Court case. It also included Kay Bailey Hutchison, who, in 1993, became the first woman from Texas to serve in the U.S. Senate. Senfronia Thompson and Eddie Bernice Johnson were also part of this cohort, becoming the first two African-American women to serve in the Texas House of Representatives (Ruthe Winegarten Foundation 2011). Irma Rangel, the first Latina to serve in the Texas House of Representatives, was elected in 1975, and Judith Zafferini became the first Latina to

serve in the Texas Senate when she was elected in 1986 (Ruthe Winegarten Foundation 2011).

The level of women's representation in the state legislature increased steadily since the 1970's, but declined after the 2010 elections. At present, women hold 21.1 percent of seats in the Texas legislature, down 2.7 percent since 2008 (CAWP 2012). Texas is ranked 35th out of 50 states in levels of women's representation in the state legislature, but the state leads the nation in the numbers of Latinas elected to public office (Garcia et al 2008).

Despite the tremendous gains achieved over the last four decades, Party politics in Texas remains deeply raced and gendered. Texas's Democratic Party underwent a transformation as newly-enfranchised minorities elected increasing numbers of Black and Latina/o representatives to statewide office and as progressive members of the Democratic Party obtained a number of leadership positions in the state. The party's conservative faction left the Democratic Party and registered as Republicans. For the last forty years, Texas's Republican Party has been gaining prominence in the state. In fact, every statewide office since 1994 has been held by a Republican. The Democratic Party is increasingly regarded as the party of African-Americans and Latinos. This reputation was solidified as the result of redistricting plans drawn by Republican lawmakers in 2003. Under the leadership of Tom Delay, Texas's electoral maps increasingly cluster Republican suburbs with rural areas of the state, solidifying Republican strongholds in these once competitive districts

(Bickerstaff 2007). Conversely, Democratic voters have been clustered into majority-minority districts; diminishing the number of competitive seats Democrats can claim (Bickerstaff 2007).

Redistricting has had a particularly deleterious impact on white women Democratic candidates. When I conducted the majority of my interviews three years ago, five white, Democratic women were serving in the Texas House of Representatives. In November of 2010, four of these women lost reelection to the House, and the fifth eked out a narrow victory, winning by just 15 votes. Currently, only one white Democratic woman is serving in the House and only one is serving in the Senate. Democratic leaders argue that Republicans have targeted white women leaders in swing districts, as they often pull votes from Republican women voters.

To counteract Republican efforts, women leaders in Texas founded Annie's List in 2002, a women's PAC supporting Pro Choice women candidates in key statewide and local positions. While Democratic women enjoyed increasing success with the support of Annie's List between 2002 and 2008, Annie's List incumbents and challengers suffered major losses during the 2010 elections. Because Annie's List concentrates its resources in supporting women in swing districts, and most Black women and Latina candidates run in majority-minority districts with Democratic strongholds, most of the organization's support has gone to white women candidates.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology that guides my research. I have also described my methods for data collection and analysis, as well as discussed the strengths and limitations of the research design I have chosen. I analyze the strengths and weaknesses of this study more fully in my concluding chapter. Finally, I have provided a brief overview of the landscape of Texas politics. In Chapters Three, Four, and Five, I turn to an analysis of the data I collected.

CHAPTER THREE: Re-Examining the Reluctance Explanation

The reluctance explanation currently dominant in the gender & politics literature suggests that women are not as likely to enter political races because they are less confident about their qualifications for office than their male counterparts and are less likely to take the initiative to enter a political race without encouragement from others (Carroll 1994; Costantini 1990; Fox and Lawless 2011; Fulton et al 2006; Lawless and Fox 2005, 2010). This explanation has also been touted by national and statewide women's political organizations. Yet, the reluctance explanation has been built on quantitative surveys that have under-represented the experiences of African-American women and Latinas and are not well-suited to illuminate the complexities and contradictions in women's and men's deciding-to-run accounts.

Using a qualitative approach, I seek to shed light on the gaps in our understanding of the gender gap in political ambition. In this chapter, I present an overview of my findings from the interviews I conducted with 46 women candidates and potential candidates in Texas. Contrary to what the "reluctance explanation" suggests, I find that a significant number of the women I interviewed did express high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. I then turn my attention to the stories of women who gave accounts synonymous with the confidence gap explanation. I argue that the "reluctance explanation" currently dominant in the

gender and politics literature falls far short of capturing the complexities in these low-efficacy accounts, and I examine the forces shaping these narratives.

Overview of Findings

I asked each of the candidates I interviewed to tell me about how she came to decide to run for political office. Most of the women I interviewed have only run for one position; I discuss the narratives of the four candidates who have run for multiple offices later in this chapter. I also asked each of the potential candidates whether or not she would ever consider running for office and probed for explanations for her response.

In analyzing the results from my interviews, I borrow the term "self-efficacy" from the field of psychology. Bandura (1997) coined the term self-efficacy to refer to people's perceptions of their ability to achieve a given outcome. Self-efficacy refers to one's confidence in her abilities to master a goal or to acquire the skills necessary to achieve a goal. Self-efficacy also involves one's sense of having control over her decisions, as well as the perception that one has influence over the outcomes that result from her decisions. Those with high levels of self-efficacy possess strong motivation to achieve goals and view failures as challenges they can master with improvement. Those with low levels of self-efficacy generally possess lower levels of motivation and view challenging tasks as threats over which they have little control. I use the term "self-efficacy" in this research because the concept captures the complex relationship between confidence, motivation, and agency that is

important for analyzing political ambition and the stories candidates and potential candidates tell about how they come to decide whether or not to run for office.

Those in what I label the "high efficacy" group expressed a significant level of confidence in their capacity to run, win, and lead once elected. In addition, subjects in the "high efficacy" group expressed strong assertions that the decision to run was their own rather than a decision made by others. Those in what I label the "moderate efficacy" group made at least some assertions of confidence and agency, but these assertions were often qualified by less confident statements. Finally, those in what I label the "low efficacy" group downplayed their confidence in their political capacities and attributed the weight of the decision to run solely to the coaxing of others.

According to the reluctance explanation for women's political under-representation, we would expect that women would generally express low levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. Surprisingly, however, a significant proportion of the women I interviewed, both candidates and potential candidates, did express moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in their narratives. Table 4 shows the level of self-efficacy my subjects expressed in their "deciding to run" accounts. I identify 16 of the women I interviewed as expressing high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" stories. I identify 16 of the women I interviewed as expressing moderate levels of self-efficacy, and I identify 14 of the women I interviewed as expressing low levels of self-efficacy in their accounts.

Table 5 shows my subjects' levels of self-efficacy by political office. As we see from this table, no meaningful patterns are apparent in women's levels of self-efficacy by level of office. We might expect that levels of self-efficacy would be lower for candidates running for higher positions, as these political races are more competitive and require candidates to invest more heavily in cultivating and managing their public personas. Interestingly, however, type of position did not appear to shape the deciding-to-run accounts of the women I interviewed. Almost half of the women I interviewed who have run for a seat in the state legislature expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their accounts compared to only one in three women who have run for a city council seat. Yet, three out of five women who have run for a local position also expressed high levels of self-efficacy.

While the majority of candidates I interviewed have run for office within the last ten years, my sample includes women who have run for office over the span of four decades. For this reason it is important to examine whether we can discern differences in women's expressed levels of self-efficacy by time period. Table 6 shows subjects' levels of self-efficacy by the first year they ran for their highest office obtained. As this table demonstrates, I found no discernable patterns in women's deciding-to-run narratives by time period.

I interviewed four candidates who had run for multiple offices. It is important to analyze how these women express self-efficacy in their accounts across these candidacies. One of these women expressed a high level of self-efficacy in both of

her narratives. Another expressed a moderate level of self-efficacy in both of her narratives. One candidate moved from a high level of self-efficacy to a low level of self-efficacy in accounting for her decisions to run for local school board and then a seat in the state legislature. Finally, I failed to inquire about one candidate's decision to run for a seat on the state school board prior to her first legislative campaign; therefore, I am not able to provide information about changes in her narrative.

While type of office and time period did not seem to play a large role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of the women I interviewed, I found that race/ethnicity played an important role in shaping these stories. In Table 7, I present my subjects levels of self-efficacy by race/ethnicity. While the white women I interviewed were more likely to downplay their confidence in their leadership abilities and deny their desire to run for political office, Black women and Latinas tended to express far higher levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. Fewer than one in five of the white women I interviewed expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their stories, while over half of the African-American women I interviewed expressed high levels of self-efficacy. Five out of the thirteen Latinas I interviewed, almost one in three, expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their accounts. Conversely, only two out of 13 Latinas, fewer than one in six, gave low-efficacy accounts of their decision whether or not to run, and only four out of 14 African-American women, about one in four, gave low-efficacy accounts. Almost half of the white women I interviewed, eight out of 19, told "deciding to run" stories that were consonant with the reluctance explanation. The unusually high proportion

of African-American women and Latinas included in my sample likely helps to illuminate these differences, which have been masked in large surveys in which women of color are often under-represented.

I provide these tables depicting my subjects' varying levels of self-efficacy as a visual aid in helping to make sense of my subjects' accounts. It is important to recognize, however, that this is not a quantitative study. It is not possible to make generalizations about women's entry into politics based on such a small, nonrandom sample. Furthermore, I do not intend to minimize or mask the complexities in my subjects' accounts by categorizing their stories by levels of self-efficacy. In the remaining pages of this dissertation, I will illuminate the complexities in my subjects' accounts. I now turn my attention to examining the low-efficacy accounts. As I demonstrate, even the low-efficacy accounts contain complexities not captured by the reluctance explanation.

The Accidental Candidates

The "deciding to run" stories told by 14 of the women I interviewed were consonant with the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation. I refer to these 14 subjects as the "low-efficacy" group. Ten of the candidates I interviewed provided low-efficacy accounts, and four of the potential candidates I interviewed gave low-efficacy accounts. Three themes characterize the low-efficacy responses of candidates: an emphasis on the role others played in the decision to run; an effort to

downplay their own role in the decision; and the expression of doubt about their interest, qualifications, and capacity for campaigning and public office.

When I asked why they decided to run for their current political positions, the low-efficacy candidates emphasized that they would not have considered entering a political race were it not for the encouragement and prodding of others. In fact, the defining narrative strategy of the low-efficacy candidates was to present themselves as "accidental candidates," ushered into political office by insistent supporters rather than their own ambition for office. One of the striking features of these low-efficacy accounts was how concisely these candidates worded their responses to my question, "How did you come to decide to run for office?" One of my subjects packaged her "deciding to run" account in a three-word answer, "I was asked." One subject responded, "I kind of fell into it by accident." Another responded "I was talked into it." Finally, one subject responded, "It was more or less decided for me."

Suzanne, a white woman in her forties with a background in nonprofit management, attributed her decision to run for a seat in the Texas legislature to the recruitment efforts of Annie's List, a statewide political PAC that supports Pro-Choice women candidates. Suzanne claimed, "I would have probably never, ever run. It never even entered my mind. It wasn't something I was considering. It never entered my mind until some people came to me and asked me to do it, Annie's List folks." Suzanne insisted that the most important piece of her story is that she was recruited to run by members of Annie's List. In this excerpt, Suzanne attempted to

underscore this point by asserting four times that she had not considered running for office until it was suggested by members of this organization.

White women tended to express the most hesitation in their "deciding to run" narratives, attributing their decision to the prodding of others. The women's PAC, Annie's List, played a critical role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of the white candidates and some of the Latina candidates I interviewed. Annie's List is vocal in getting out the message that women are more hesitant to run for office than men. The candidates who expressed the most concise, simplistic low-efficacy accounts have all been endorsed by, or are supporters of Annie's List. It seems that the message of this PAC plays an important role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of women candidates involved with the organization. In fact, the changing level of self-efficacy that Sarah, a white state legislator, expressed when she told the stories of her decisions to run for her local board and then for a seat in the state legislature can likely be accounted for by Sarah's involvement in Annie's List as she moved into statewide politics. When I asked Sarah about her decision to run for a seat on her local school board, she explained, "I decided that was a good area of service for me." When I inquired about her decision to run for a seat in the state legislature, she attributed her decision to the recruitment of others, explaining, "A group of Democrats approached me about running."

Despite their attempts to downplay their own agency in their "deciding to run" accounts, many of the low-efficacy stories told by the candidates contained omissions

and complexities worthy of analysis. For example, Carrie, a white woman who held a seat in the Texas House for ten years, gave the following account of how she decided to run for a seat in the legislature:

> My husband and I were just sitting on our sofa one night watching the news … and the 10:00 news said that … the state representative who had held *the district* … had decided not to run for reelection. And I thought, now that's interesting. And then my phone started ringing. Prior to that, some people had talked to me about running for a seat on the school board. … But, then when this position came open in the legislature, people started calling me. And I will admit, in the beginning I told people I would think about it just because I thought that would make them quit calling me. But, of course, it was just the opposite.

Here Carrie emphasized that her friends and acquaintances proposed the idea for her to run for the legislature. Even when she acknowledged her own role in the story – telling her encouragers that she would consider running – she dismissed her actions by claiming that she only agreed to consider the run to get people to stop asking her to do so.

Downplaying Efficacy

While some of the candidates I interviewed expressed low levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts, others I categorized as expressing

moderate levels of self-efficacy acknowledged some agency in their decisions, but downplayed their self-efficacy through omissions and qualifications in their narratives. In their concisely-worded "deciding to run" accounts, several of my subjects omitted references to the groundwork they, themselves, laid to be regarded by others as viable candidates. For example, Gail, a white woman with a background in nonprofit management, told the following story about how she made the decision to run for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives: "I had never run for office before my … campaign for the House. A group of Democrats approached me about running. I thought about it for a while and decided to do it."

In this story, Gail implied that she had not considered running for office until she was approached by Democratic leaders to run for the legislative seat. Yet, when I probed further, Gail acknowledged that she had laid the groundwork for this "ask" by making it known that she would be interested in running for office. "Well, I had told some people that I might be interested in running for statewide office at some point. When this group asked my friend if she knew of anyone who might be interested in running in my district, she helped bring us together."

Gail's initial omission of the piece in her story where she, herself, took the initiative to discuss a potential run for office helped her to create a "deciding to run" narrative that emphasized the role that others played in encouraging her to run for office. Because she did acknowledge her own initiative after some probing, however,

I categorize her story as a "moderate-efficacy" account. In fact, a number of narratives I classify as "moderate efficacy" contain such complexities.

Gloria, a Latina state legislator, gave the following account of her decision to run for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives:

> I kind of fell into it by accident. What happened was, there was a gentleman who we were supporting who was going to run for the position. And he was going to run against the incumbent. And at the very last second he decided not to run. I had gone to my office, and my law partners approached me and said, "We think you'd be great at this." It was very last minute. I didn't have time to give it as much thought as I would have normally, which is probably a good thing in this respect, because I would have what-if'ed it to death (laughs). if given the opportunity. … You know, I think women in general tend to be a little more cautious about decisions like this. And, so, I'm so glad that, on this one occasion, I didn't analyze it to death, that when the window of opportunity was open, that I went ahead and accepted the challenge.

I categorize Gloria's story as a "moderate efficacy" account. Gloria emphasized the role that her law partners and confidants played in encouraging her to enter the political race. Implicitly, she downplayed the role that her involvement in her community's political circles played in her path to candidacy. Gloria's public

support of another candidate, particularly so early in the race, is indicative of her heavy involvement in politics. Her involvement in political campaigns likely played a role in her coworkers' identification of her as a viable potential candidate. Yet, Gloria did not include her political activities as part of her description of her path into political leadership.

"Gloria's deciding to run" story also contains an interesting contradiction. Her story differs from those I categorize as "low-efficacy" in that she acknowledged making a brash decision to enter the race when the opportunity arose. Yet, Gloria justified this piece of her story by asserting that her impulsive decision to enter the race was unusual for women in general, and for her in particular, as she claimed she was glad that "this one time" she made the decision without hesitation. Like Gloria, other subjects' "deciding to run" stories contained initiative acts that my subjects dismissed or attempted to downplay.

After recounting her path into government work, Beverly, a white former city council member, explained to me, "I decided to run for council. Now, I had never been in a political party. I had never been involved in an election. I knew absolutely nothing about it. And I threw my hat in the ring the day before the filing deadline. So, it was just a goofy thing to do." Beverly's "deciding to run" account differs from those I categorize as low-efficacy, as she recounted her bold decision to enter a race for city council without much thought, hesitation, or prodding from others. Yet, Beverly also

attempted to soften or minimize her assertiveness, casting her decision aside as "just a goofy thing to do.

The Reluctant Potential Candidates

The reluctance explanation for women's under-representation suggests that women potential candidates would express reservations about running for office and justify these reservations with expressions of self doubt. I found, however, that only four of the potential candidates I interviewed gave "deciding *not* to run" accounts that were consonant with the reluctance explanation. Four of the potential candidates I interviewed expressed some self-efficacy in their accounts, and five of the potential candidates expressed high levels of self-efficacy.

Table 8 depicts the level of self-efficacy potential candidates expressed by race/ethnicity. Because the proportions of subjects for potential candidates were so skewed, it is difficult to make generalizations about the potential candidates' levels of self-efficacy by race/ethnicity. I do, however, discuss the role that activist identities play in shaping these accounts in the next chapter.

Of course, part of what I looked for to determine level of self-efficacy is whether or not the potential candidates I interviewed said they would ever consider running for office. In my analysis, however, I also found that the potential candidates had very different reasons for explaining their answers. I took these justifications into account as I analyzed their narratives.

Not only did the low-efficacy potential candidates say that they would not consider running for office in the future, but they also justified their answers by focusing on their own hesitations or lack of strength to run for office. As Dorothy, a white, retired bureaucrat who is active in local and state politics explained: "I'd just rather be in a supportive role. I really don't like to be in a leadership position." When I asked her why she thought this was the case, she responded, "Well, I guess I never feel that confident. It's a bit of insecurity." Dorothy's admission that her lack of confidence in her leadership abilities has kept her from stepping forward to run for office is the response we would expect from potential candidates based on the reluctance explanation.

Rachel is a white woman in her mid-thirties who has worked for several political campaigns and elected officials. When I asked her whether she had considered running for office, she laughed out loud.

> I have so many reasons why I wouldn't and at this moment no reasons why I would. The reasons why I wouldn't are everything from, I don't have a thick skin. And I have a kind of fear about what kinds of horrible things people would say about me and how I'd spend so many awake nights thinking about the latest horrible thing that somebody had said. (laughs). You know, and I'd really be hurt by it.

Rachel's fear of not having a thick enough skin for political campaigning is a hesitation that ran through the narratives of both low-efficacy candidates and

potential candidates. Interestingly, these women did not often express doubts about their capacity to lead competently once elected to office. Their hesitations most often resided in fears that they would not survive a brutal campaign. Most often their narratives reflected an internalization of doubt or lack of ambition rather than a critique of the masculinized ethos that is at the core of modern campaigning.

Jennifer is an African-American city employee in her 30's who is active in Democratic Party politics. Like Dorothy and Rachel, Jennifer explained her lack of interest in running for office by stating a preference for working behind-the-scenes. Here is how Jennifer responded to my question, "Would you consider running for office someday?"

> It's very unlikely. Very unlikely. I think, you know, running for office takes a lot of time, a strong commitment. And I don't think that, I think that I'm most effective behind the scenes, and that's what I'm most comfortable with.

In contrast to other women's accounts, however, Jennifer did present a critique of the demands of political life.

> Now politics has gotten so intrusive into your background, and there's so many petty things. And it's not even about having a thick skin, because I have a pretty thick skin. It's just the fact that they're so intrusive into your private life. And I don't really like that. (laughs). … I've never been a shy person, or I've never had a problem speaking

> in public. You know, I do that for my job. I'm speaking in front of commissions. I mean, that's part of my job. So, it's not like the public spotlight, like I'm shy or an introvert. No, none of that.

Two of the most fascinating stories I heard as I conducted my interviews exemplify how the low-efficacy candidates internalize rather than critique the political process. Victoria is a Latina in her forties who is active in the Democratic Party and has served on the state board of Annie's List. Though she has never run for public office, Victoria came close to running for Democratic Party Chair in her city. Victoria eventually decided to pull out of the race for this key party position.

I first learned about the dynamics in this race for Democratic Party Chair from Lorena, a Latina activist in her 70's who is still heavily involved in state politics. Here was Lorena's account of the circumstances leading to Victoria's withdrawal from the race:

> *Victoria* was going to run for chair of the local party. And I was hysterical over it. I loved the fact that we might get a woman who was not going to run for higher office, who was committed to opening up the party, to recruiting precinct chairs, to do grassroots organizing the way Obama helped us. I was very happy about it. Well, they yanked her candidacy in support of *a white male candidate*. And to me *this candidate* is another white male with political ambitions, and he needs to be visible. And they yanked her candidacy, yanked it.

> She won't speak out about this, not like I do. The one thing that I worry about her is that she thinks that her power depends on other people. And to me that's not real power. But, I was really excited because I felt as a Latina, and as a woman, that the women of the party could gain real power.

Lorena put me in contact with Victoria, and I interviewed her as part of this research. During our interview, Victoria gave the following account of why she decided to withdraw from the race for Texas Democratic Party Chair:

> Okay. Probably about a year and a half ago, *a U.S. Senator from Texas* wanted me to run for Democratic Party Chair. And at that time I considered it and started putting feelers out there and even started meeting with people about it. But, then, there was another person that got into the race. And I feel that there are certain positions that really should not be spending very much money in races, that being one of them. … And, initially, the thought was that we were going to have to spend between $70,000 and $100,000 per person to get that position. … And I just decided, no, I just don't think the timing is right for me. … I was also getting ready to become president of the booster club. … And the other person who was running for that office really, really wanted it very badly. And so I just thought maybe there'll be another time for me.

These two accounts of the circumstances leading to Victoria's withdrawal from the race for Democratic Party Chair reveal much about how the political process is gendered in ways that are of significant consequence to women. Lorena suggested that Victoria was pushed out of the campaign by party elites who decided to support a man who was more politically ambitious. Even Victoria alludes to these dynamics in her account, as she acknowledged that the entry of the other candidate into the race, and his eagerness to climb the political ladder, caused her to reconsider her candidacy. Yet, despite the fact that Victoria was primed to run for this critical party position, and despite the fact that the entry of the male candidate ultimately caused her to pull out of the race, Victoria still relied on a low-efficacy narrative strategy to explain her decision to leave the race. For example, when I asked whether or not she would consider running for office in the future, she responded after a long pause:

> No. No. Because I never wanted to be in public office. I've never wanted to run for office, and I still don't want to. And the only reason why I would have done that is because the Senator asked me to do it and because he had faith in me that I could do the job. Did I have a real passion for it, in regards to running? No. No.

What is also interesting about Victoria's explanation as to why she decided to pull out of the race is that she mentioned becoming president of her daughter's Booster Club. Family responsibilities have traditionally been cited as a significant barrier to women's political participation, and Victoria mentions her commitment to

her child's extracurricular activities as a reason for pulling out of the race. Yet, knowing the political dynamics driving her decision to pull out of the race for Democratic Party Chair, it is clear that this explanation is a diplomatic strategy Victoria employed to mask the power struggle that ultimately pushed her out of the race.

The Structural and Cultural Context

Why do the white women I interviewed tell "deciding to run" stories that are more often consonant with the reluctance explanation than Black and Latina women? To make sense of these findings, we must consider both structural and cultural dynamics.

When comparing the backgrounds of candidates for legislative seats, it becomes clear that structural factors play a role in shaping the political paths of the women I interviewed. Every one of the white legislative candidates I interviewed ran for a seat in a highly-competitive swing district. As I noted in Chapter One, their seats are so competitive that four of the five white Democratic women serving in the Texas House of Representatives during the time I conducted my interviews lost their 2010 reelection campaigns. Only one white Democratic woman currently serves in the Texas House and only one serves in the Texas Senate.

Table 9 depicts white women candidates' level of self-efficacy by political office. As this table illustrates, not one of the white legislative candidates gave a high-efficacy account of her decision to run for her legislative seat. It is likely that part of the reason for this pattern is that (1) these candidates are running in highly-

professionalized political contexts in which there is more competition for support from the Democratic Party and (2) women in these districts might actually need to wait to be tapped on the shoulder to be considered viable candidates by party elites.

As Table 9 also illustrates, there is much more variation in the level of self-efficacy express by white women who have run for city council seats and by those who have not yet run for political office. This is likely due to several structural factors. Firstly, the city council positions are much less competitive and subject to less public scrutiny than legislative positions. Secondly, the white city council candidates I interviewed each ran in cities in which women make up half of the city council. This electoral climate might be more hospitable to women's candidacies.

Feminist Organizations and the Double Hermeneutic

Discourses employed by feminist organizations such as Annie's List play a role in reinforcing these narrative realities, providing candidates and potential candidates with concise storylines from which they can construct their "deciding to run" accounts. The candidates who named their affiliation with Annie's List tended to deliver more concise messages emphasizing the fact that they were asked by others to run for office. The concise "I was asked" narrative I heard from so many of the Annie's List candidates reflects the organization's primary message that women's greatest barrier to public office is their own hesitation to enter political races coupled with parties' practice of overlooking women candidates for recruitment to office.

The "reluctance explanation" for women's under-representation dominant in the political science literature was adopted by national and statewide women's political organizations, which in turn helped make this message part of the narratives of both the women candidates they endorse and other women active in the organization. Giddens (1984) termed this flow of discourses from academia to social movements the "double hermeneutic."

Feminist political organizations promote the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation in their promotional material and in their candidate trainings. Emily's List (2011) posts the following description of their Political Opportunity Program (POP) on their website: "Our dedicated POP team hits the ground every week to recruit, train, and support women candidates – knowing that a key reason why women hesitate to run for office is because they simply haven't been asked. POP identifies tomorrow's political leaders – and we ask."

Annie's List displays the following message on its website: "There are countless women just like you who demonstrate their leadership potential, but just need to be recruited as the leaders of tomorrow. Help us identify and recruit the next Ann Richards, the next Barbara Jordan, and the next Annie Webb Blanton."

As part of my research for this project, I interviewed Robert Jones, Political Director for Annie's List. Jones gave the following explanation of the purpose of the organization:

> Study after study has shown that women are less likely to run for office unless they are asked by someone. It's that critical moment when someone comes to them and says, "You know what? I think you're smart enough. I think you're great. I think you should run for office." Then she considers it. … But, that initial ask has to happen. And that's a big part of what Annie's List is about. In fact, we say in our training, "Consider yourself asked."

Jones made the process of the double hermeneutic explicit, referring to the work of Jennifer Lawless and Richard Fox (2005, 2010) throughout our interview:

> I keep referencing that Brown study, but it was really an amazing piece of research for what we do. They documented prevalently that women are often their own worst enemies to themselves … because they are a lot more likely to consider themselves not qualified for office, which is a big barrier.

Annie's List's message that women are hesitant to run for office without significant recruitment, which has been adopted by their endorsed candidates, likely reflect, not only the structural reality of these competitive districts, but also the gendered values of the majority populations in the swing districts to which Annie's List focuses its resources. White communities have historically delineated stricter divisions between the public and private sphere, gendering the public the masculine domain and the private the domain of women. These boundaries have blurred since

the 1960's as middle class white women have entered the work force and politics in higher numbers. Yet, white women still face discursive barriers as they attempt to traverse this new landscape in which they are accepted into political life, as long as they strike a difficult balance between demonstrating masculinized qualities of leadership while preserving a feminine persona. The strategy of presenting themselves as accidental candidates serves the purpose of providing a storyline that minimizes women's ambition, which is marked masculine, while promoting the feminist message that women need to be recruited more heavily to run for office. The complexity of the "accidental candidate" narrative is that, while this narrative provides an avenue to avoid the ambition conundrum, this message also reifies gender stereotypes and leaves the masculinized political ethos intact.

Conclusion

The data I presented in this chapter challenge the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation in several significant ways. First, the majority of candidates and potential candidates I interviewed expressed moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in their narratives, findings that contradict the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation. My findings are not generalizeable, and I do not make claims that we should disregard the reluctance explanation altogether. My data do indicate, however, that the reluctance explanation more precisely represents the experiences of white women and has minimized the experiences of women of color, who are under-represented in quantitative surveys.

As I also demonstrated in this chapter, even the narratives that were consonant with the reluctance explanation contained complexities and ambiguities that are essential characteristics of storytelling. Quantitative research has too often regarded women's accounts as objective measures of political ambition. My findings suggest, however, that we should regard women's "deciding to run" accounts as narratives that women candidates and potential candidates construct by drawing from personal experiences, gendered cultural discourses, and social movement messages.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the "deciding to run" accounts of those I categorize as expressing high levels of self-efficacy. I argue that the ways in which social movement discourses are raced and gendered plays a large role in shaping these differences. The candidates who identified as community activists or expressed a commitment to racial and ethnic and economic justice tended to express higher levels of self-efficacy in their accounts than both women in their racial/ethnic groups who did not express these commitments and white women in both the activist and non-activist groups.

CHAPTER FOUR: From Resistance to Representation

In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation falls far short of capturing the variation and complexities in the "deciding to run" accounts of women leaders. In fact, the "deciding to run" stories told by only 14 of the women I interviewed were consonant with the reluctance explanation. Far more of the candidates and potential candidates I interviewed expressed higher levels of self-efficacy in their accounts than the reluctance story would lead us to expect. In this chapter, I turn my attention to the women I interviewed who expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. I find that social movement identities play an important role in shaping these accounts, but also that these movement discourses are deeply raced and gendered.

The Efficacious Candidates

Sixteen of the women I interviewed expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" narratives, a far higher proportion than the reluctance explanation would suggest. These women expressed high levels of confidence in their ability to run, win, and lead. They placed themselves at the center of the decision-making process, even downplaying the role others played in shaping their decision to run. These women were also more likely to discuss the initiative they

took to lay the groundwork for their campaigns, details that were often downplayed by the low-efficacy candidates.

Carol, an African-American state representative, gave the following explanation for why she decided to run for a seat in the Texas legislature.

> I was very unhappy with the person that was in the seat at the time. He had been our representative for … years, and there had been no change in our community. He never held town hall meetings. He never tried to communicate with the people. I thought to myself, somebody should run against this guy, and who better to do it than me!

Barbara, an African-American legislator, gave the following explanation for her decision to run for a seat in the Texas House:

> The gentleman who had been representing *my district* had been here for … years, and he hadn't done an awful lot for the people in the district. So, I decided that, if I was going to complain about the things he was not doing, to identify the problem, you also must have a solution. For the people, I thought that I was the solution, so I decided to run against *an incumbent*. I did that, and I won.

Sandrah, an African-American legislator who has served in the Texas House for almost forty years, asserted that her standpoint as a woman made her uniquely-

suited for political leadership. Sandrah gave the following explanation for why she decided to run for her legislative seat:

> I just felt that I could do as well or a better job than the men in making laws for the state. And I thought that I had an advantage, and the advantage was that I was a female who was able to see another side to an issue that a man was not able to see. And I thought that I was at a better vantage point because I had been a school teacher and a wife. It gave me a leg up on a man who would perhaps hold the same office.

These representatives identified their anger over the poor performance of their representatives as the catalyst for their decision to run for office. In contrast to the hesitation expressed by the low-efficacy candidates, these women expressed high levels of confidence in their leadership abilities. Carol's confident exclamation "And who better to do it than me?" and Barbara's proclamation that, "For the people, I thought I was the solution" stand in striking contrast to the stories told by the low-efficacy candidates I discussed in Chapter Three.

Each of these three candidates claimed their decision to run as their own, using active phrases like, "I decided," "I thought," "I did that," and "I won." These assertations are used to construct quite different narratives from the low-efficacy accounts in which candidates used passive phrases like, "I was asked," and "It was decided for me."

As with the low-efficacy accounts, the high-efficacy narratives should also be analyzed as storytelling practices in which the storyteller emphasizes certain details and downplays or omits others to construct narratives that resonate with, and sometimes challenge, dominant cultural discourses. Like many of the high-efficacy candidates I interviewed, Barbara's initial "deciding to run" account did not include any other actors except her opponent. Yet, when I asked her whether anyone had encouraged her to run for office, she responded: "No, I had a bit of encouragement though, too. … There were any number of people that I had worked with in political campaigns with before that came to me and asked me about running."

Like the experiences of many of the candidates I interviewed, Barbara's decision to run was made in response both to self-assessment and to the encouragement of others. Yet, it is notable how these candidates chose to emphasize certain aspects of this process and downplay others in order to construct quite different narratives about their decisions to run.

Five of the potential candidates I interviewed also expressed higher levels of self-efficacy, proclaiming interest in running for office in the future. Veronica, an African-American political consultant, expressed, not only an interest in running for office and building a career in politics, but also confidence in her ability to be a strong candidate and elected leader. When I asked Veronica if she had ever considered running for office, she responded that she was interested in running for a statewide position. "I've always wanted to start at the state level, because I think

there's a pattern to how you get certain seats. So, I feel like if I start at the state level, I could move up to a Congressional seat."

When I asked why she wanted to run for office, Veronica responded, "Because I feel like I'd be a good candidate. I feel like I could win."

And that's something that many women don't say."

In Chapter Three, I discussed how the low-efficacy candidates downplayed the groundwork they laid in their decision to run for office in their accounts, portraying the decision as mostly made by others. In contrast, a notable number of the high-efficacy candidates emphasized the initiative they took in laying the groundwork for a political campaign. Monica, a Latina county commissioner, was one of the few candidates I interviewed who acknowledged having childhood dreams of "becoming a political leader." Monica proudly recounted her bid for the Presidency of a Mexican-American organization, infuriating the men in leadership. She also openly acknowledged that she laid the groundwork for her first campaign by informing key political leaders that she was interested in running for office. When a long-time incumbent holding a county commission seat decided not to run for reelection, she took advantage of the political opportunity. Monica described how she identified groups with which she had weak ties and tried to establish a connection. Recognizing that she had few ties with white men prominent in the community, she joined Crime Stoppers to build a network of support.

Joanna, a Latina city council member in her early thirties, relayed the following story about her decision to run for a seat on her city council:

> One candidate I volunteered for, he lost his race for city council. I told him that, even though I loved organizing campaigns, I really started to want to be the candidate. I love putting together campaigns, but I also wanted to be the person that actually makes a change, the one people come to to make change."

Rather than claim that they were convinced to run by others, these women acknowledged the active steps they took to be recognized as viable candidates by party leaders. Performing this work is essential in the political process. It is notable that the low-efficacy candidates tended to downplay their own initiative, while the high-efficacy candidates incorporated this work into their "deciding to run" narratives.

Candidates as Social Movement Insiders

Scholars have yet to understand why women of color have enjoyed proportionally higher rates of election to statewide office than white women. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that African-American women and Latinas tended to express higher levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" stories than did white women, suggesting that there are important structural and discursive dynamics underlying this puzzle of success. Here I argue that social movement discourses play a powerful role in shaping these patterns. , leading women of color with activist

identities to express higher levels of self-efficacy in their accounts than non-activist women and even white feminists.

One of the most striking observations I made as I conducted this research was just how many women I interviewed incorporated activist discourses into their "deciding to run" accounts. I define "activist discourses" as networks of meanings expressing group consciousness and supporting the agenda of a social movement. Eleven of the women I interviewed incorporated "some" social movement discourses into the biographical accounts they provided me during their interviews, and 26 of my subjects incorporated a significant level of activist discourses into their accounts. Only 9 of the women I interviewed incorporated no movement discourses into their answers. The women I identify as deploying "some" activist discourses discussed their involvement in specific movement organizations and used language indicating that they identified with broader movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and the women's movement. In addition, they deployed some language extending from left movement frames, including words like "injustice," "inequality," and "change." The 26 women I identify as deploying a significant level of movement discourses named their social movement work and activist identities as playing a central role in their involvement in electoral politics. I refer to this group as the "activist group." I provide a few glimpses into their stories here.

I asked each of the women I interviewed how she became involved in "politics," leaving it up to each to interpret the meaning of the word. The

distinguishing feature of the activists' narratives is that they tended to conflate electoral politics with their social movement commitments. For example, Veronica, an African-American political consultant who aspires to run for public office, explained, "…I think there are two parts in politics. There's the typical elected officials, you know, prominent figure, leadership side of politics. And then there's the more activist, grassroots side of politics." Veronica then identified herself with the "activist" side of politics, presenting her community work, her activist identity, and her increasing participation in formal politics as inextricably intertwined.

Several of these women incorporated moments of "political awakening" into their stories of how they became involved in formal politics. These political awakenings were not stories of callings to become politicians; rather, they were stories accounting for their developing consciousness as members of oppressed groups and emerging activist identities. Ana, a young Latina who recently ran an unsuccessful city council campaign, described her political awakening as she transitioned into college:

> I went from a community that was probably 90% to 95% Hispanic to *an Ivy League university*. And I realized for the first time that I was a minority, and I didn't have a lot of opportunities that my peers had who also attended *my university*. You know, I struggled. I did. So, that was just kind of an awakening of inequity. And, then, during the time I was *in California*, … there was a big anti-immigrant movement

> … that a lot of us Hispanic students took personally, … having had family members that are immigrants. … So, I think that was my instant awakening of a political consciousness, … that there is something greater, you know, that there are forces in this country that we need to be aware of.

Upon her return to Texas, Ana contacted several prominent Latina activists who helped her get involved in political campaigns addressing issues of pressing concern to Latinos. Ana also joined several women's groups and soon became actively involved in party politics. She has served on several local commissions, has volunteered for a number of political campaigns, and has served in leadership roles in political organizations. The fact that Ana rooted what she calls her "political awakening" in her emerging identity as a Latina suggests that Ana's activist identity is deeply intertwined with her identity as an actor in electoral politics.

When I asked Aurora, a Latina state representative, to describe how she became involved in politics, she gave the following explanation:

> Well, I started learning my history as a Mexican-American. … And when I started reading that history, I started changing and asking questions at school. And my life has never been the same, because I began to see the good things about this country, but also the things that have been done to our community that weren't right – laws that were passed or whatever to keep us in our place. You know, the high

> dropout rate in our schools, all of that just came together. And finding out that you can do something about it.

Aurora went on to obtain a law degree and became actively involved in a number of organizations and coalitions working on social justice issues.

Finally, several of these women identified the Civil Rights Movement as the catalyst for their involvement in formal politics. Sandrah, an African-American state representative, got involved in political campaigns when several African-American lawyers in her city were running for election to try to integrate the judiciary. After gaining experience working on campaigns, Sandra decided to run for a seat in the Texas House of Representatives. She has served in the Texas legislature since the early 1970's.

Barbara, an African-American legislator, also named her emerging identification with the Civil Rights Movement as the catalyst for her involvement in formal politics:

> Right after I got out of high school in California, I moved back to Texas. And that was during the era of the Civil Rights Movement. And many days there were kids who were talking about the issues and about things that were going on and about politics and what have you. So, I wanted to be able to participate in the conversation. And in order to do that, I started reading the newspaper, watching the news, and

> volunteering in the campaigns of people who were running for public office. … So, working as a volunteer in campaigns, I came to love politics.

It is striking that such a large proportion of the women I interviewed incorporated at least some activist discourses into their narratives. This finding substantiates the arguments of Rochon (2000), who claims that social movement discourses eventually become integrated into mainstream discourses, even as they are altered and contested when they are adopted by the dominant culture. We might also find that these discourses take unique forms and serve unique purposes when they are adopted by leaders in the political sphere.

Table 10 shows my subjects levels of activist discourses by race/ethnicity. Latinas and African-American women comprised the majority of the "activist" groups. Every Latina I interviewed incorporated at least some movement discourses into her narrative, and all but two of the African-American women I interviewed incorporated at least some movement discourses. Only 13 out of the 19 white women I interviewed incorporated activist discourses into their accounts. White women comprised only six of the 26 women I identify as deploying a significant level of movement discourses and, conversely, comprised seven of the nine subjects who did not use any activist discourses.

Most of the women deploying activist discourses identified strongly with racial/ethnic identity movements, and their discourses also encompassed class-based

concerns. The fact that these women expressed solidarity with poor and working class communities is notable, as the overwhelming majority of the women leaders I interviewed possess college degrees and have enough personal wealth to run for office. Only seven women in the activist groups identified strongly with feminism or women's rights organizations. Four of these women were white, one identifying strongly with the gay rights movement. Three of these women were Latinas, who also identified strongly with racial/ethnic movements. A significant proportion of the Black and Latina women I interviewed expressed an intersectional consciousness, incorporating feminist discourses in relationship to racial and class consciousness. I will discuss what I term "intersectional consciousness" in the following chapter.

Table 11 depicts the relationship between the level of activist discourses my subjects deployed and the level of self-efficacy they expressed in accounting for their decisions whether or not to run for office. As this table demonstrates, the activist candidates and potential candidates tended to express higher levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts than did the non-activist candidates. Nineteen of the 26 activists I interviewed expressed moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" narratives. Eleven of these activists expressed high levels of self-efficacy in their accounts. The activist candidates were more likely to underscore their confidence in their ability to lead and were more likely to emphasize that their decision to run was their own. Even when they expressed having reservations about running for office, the activists tended to emphasize their sense of obligation to their causes and courage drawn from their collective identities as the forces that propelled

them to decide to run. Finally, the potential candidates with activist orientations were more likely to say that they would consider running for office in the future, and even those who said they would not run for office emphasized their boldness and unwillingness to compromise their convictions, rather than lack of confidence or fear of public scrutiny, as their reasons not to run. The exception to this trend, however, were white women who deployed feminist discourses, particularly the candidates and potential candidates who identified an affiliation with Annie's List, the statewide PAC supporting Pro-Choice women candidates. As I will discuss later in this chapter, these movement discourses serve to strengthen raced standards of feminine goodness in various political contexts.

The Obligated Candidates

As with the low-efficacy candidates and potential candidates I discussed in Chapter Three, the narratives of the high-efficacy leaders contained complexities and ambiguities that are essential features of storytelling. Few of the women I interviewed portrayed "politician" as a title they sought for personal achievement. Women in both the low-efficacy and high-efficacy groups tried to distance themselves from the stereotype of the self-interested, career-oriented politician, insisting that they, themselves, dislike politics and career politicians. Carla, an African-American school board member, said the following about politics: "I've never been interested in politics. And I'm still not interested in politics. … I don't even see school board members as politicians." Here Carla attempted to distance

herself from the stereotype of the career politician by asserting that she does not even regard her elected position on a school board as a "political" position.

Nikki, a Black city council member, incorporated the following disclaimer into her "deciding to run" narrative:

> One thing that's important to know is that I never had a vision of becoming an elected leader. This wasn't something I had dreamed about since I was a child or anything. I wanted to effect change, and the perception is that people in public office aren't true for people. So, when people asked me about it, I said, "No, that's not something I'm interested in."

Though many of the candidates and potential candidates I interviewed attempted to distance themselves from the stereotype of the ambitious, career-oriented politician, the women in the activist groups negotiated these complexities in strikingly different ways. While the non-activists and women affiliated with Annie's List attempted to reconcile the disjunction between their claimed distaste for politics and their decision to run by emphasizing the role that others played in pushing them into the political arena, many of the activists attempted to reconcile this disjunction by presenting their decision to run as an obligatory act extending from their commitments to their social justice causes. Nikki, for example, explained that she felt a sense of obligation to run since she believed that she would do more for her causes than those who might otherwise be elected.

> I put all of my faith in God. And I did a lot of praying about it. And I asked, can I use this position to make change? And community members told me, "You know, you're going to be unhappy with the person who gets elected. And you're going to have to look back and think, that should be me making those decisions."

Wanda is an African-American attorney who was serving in an appointed position as a municipal judge at the time of our interview. She had also made an unsuccessful bid for a county judiciary seat. Wanda explained that, despite her hesitation to run for office, she felt a sense of obligation to run for the position, as she thought it was important to maintain Black representation on the judiciary when the only Black judge on the court left.

> This was going to leave the court with no black or brown judges. And this court was established to be a diverse court. So, I decided I was obligated to run. You know, when I walk into that court and see all of the pictures of judges, I think there should be someone there who looks like me. And I think for all the people who are visiting the court, there should be judges who look like them.

Wanda went on to explain:

> I grew up in the '60's with the Civil Rights Movement. And I think we were really inculcated with the values that we had the obligation to give back. We had this understanding that these are things we are

> fighting for collectively. So, even if sometimes it's not something I particularly want to do, I feel a sense of obligation to give back, to work towards those larger goals.

Some of the activist candidates and potential candidates I interviewed expressed enough reservations about running for office that I categorized them as expressing moderate or low levels of self-efficacy. Interestingly, however, many of the activists I interviewed expressed higher levels of confidence and personal agency in their accounts, even as they discussed their sense of obligation to their causes, than the non-activists, who often attributed their decision to run to the prodding of others. "Courage" discourses commonly deployed to build movement participation likely play an important role in shaping these differences.

The Courageous Leaders

A notable difference between the narratives of the activists and non-activists I interviewed emerged in their discussion of what it would mean to take the risk of vying for the opportunity to be elected to serve as a public leader. This difference was most striking in my interviews with potential candidates. With the exception of those affiliated with Annie's List, the activists were more likely to say that, under the right circumstances, they would consider running for office. Even the activists who said that they would not consider entering a political race tended to emphasize, not a lack of confidence or fear of the spotlight, but rather concern that their activist work would be compromised were they to hold an elected office.

The activist potential candidates who said they would not run for office tended to deploy "courage" discourses to explain their answers, emphasizing that they were too bold and outspoken to be confined by political leadership. Antoinette, a Latina activist who has received local public attention for her work in a low-income neighborhood in her town, gave the following response when I asked her whether she had considered running for office: "No, because I have seen that, working as a citizen, you can get a lot more done than being in that seat."

Similarly, Margaret, a white, gay rights and feminist activist who is considered a grandmother in state politics, gave the following reason for her disinterest in running for office: "Well, I think it's that there would be certain things that I'd be very much in favor of, but it wouldn't be the thing I should do or would need to do. And I think I'd be made aware of that by everybody I was working around."

Lisa, a white disability activist who is also involved in formal politics, stated that she would consider running for office if the right opportunity presented itself. Yet, she, too, discussed the constraint she might feel in reconciling her activist identity with becoming a political insider.

> Yeah, I do worry about getting frustrated with the process though. I get frustrated now, as an activist, with the process. And if I had to be there every *week* and decide on issues, I would probably be very frustrated with the speed at which you get things done. So, I'd have to

> learn to live with that. But, I think sometimes it gives you more of an edge as a leader if you don't put up with some of that.

Whether proclaiming that they were too committed to their convictions to run for office, or that they considered running for public office out of a commitment to their causes, these and other activists I interviewed deploy courage discourses to make sense of their decisions whether or not to run for office. The "courage" discourse appeared in other places in my interviews with activists. When I asked my subjects, "Who are your political heroes?" the answers of many of the activists again revealed how "courage" discourses drawn from social movements shaped their political values. Evelyn is an African-American activist who serves on a number of boards of community organizations. When I asked her about her political heroes, she said the following:

> You know, I don't know her, but just because she's very proud of who she is and didn't have to quote go in the closet and pretend to be somebody she wasn't -- the new mayor of Houston who is openly gay. I applaud her for being true to who she is and running in that truthfulness.

By relaying this story, Evelyn expressed that she values in elected leaders, not political savvy or an ability to compromise, but courage, and particularly, courage relating to the expression of a marginalized identity. Similarly, Margaret relayed the

following story about an interaction she had with former Texas Governor Ann Richards.

> We were in a meeting; I think it was before she ran for Treasurer. Maybe she was County Commissioner. But, we were talking about something, and we disagreed on it. And she turned around and said, "You're one uppity woman." And I kind of swallowed a little bit, and I turned around and said right back to her, "You know, you're right. I am."

In telling this story, Margaret presented herself as a woman daring to push the boundaries of femininity in order to promote her social justice causes. She relayed this story of being called an "uppity woman" by Ann Richards as a testament to her courage and willingness to be bold and courageous in the face of injustice.

Patricia, a white city council member who got involved in politics after taking a leadership role in a citywide campaign for economic justice, had the following to say about what she looks for in potential leaders: "*My city* has very low expectations for our elected leaders. "I look for people with a vision. Even if you don't win, you make a contribution to your cause by adding your ideas to the discussion." By asserting that even an election loss of a visionary leader can further social movement goals, Patricia attempted to downplay the personal cost involved in an election defeat.

The Structural and Cultural Context

To make sense of my subjects' narratives, we must take into account both structural and cultural factors that contribute to the multiple narrative realities within which these candidates work to construct their public identities. Even within the state of Texas, the women I interviewed are making political decisions and constructing their public personas in very different political contexts. With the exception of only one Latina candidate, all of the Black and Latina legislative candidates I interviewed ran for office in majority-minority districts. These districts are overwhelmingly Democratic, and political races are generally less competitive than in the swing districts in which the white legislative candidates I interviewed were running. It is possible that women running for office in these districts have more latitude to decide to run without feeling like they need to be tapped by party leaders.

Why do social movement discourses play such an important role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of the women I interviewed? Social movements scholars are increasingly turning their attention to the ways in which movement participants strengthen collective identity through conscious-raising activities. The consciousness-raising work performed by social movement communities to which the activists belong, and that have spread to the broader culture, provided discourses that likely give these women the impetus to overcome hesitations about taking the risk of entering a political race, or to be more open to the possibility than non-activist potential candidates. In turn, these candidates help to legitimize movement narratives by carrying activist discourses into the sphere of formal politics. By weaving stories of courage in the face of oppression, struggle against opponents, and sacrifice for the

"cause," my subjects participate in work to strengthen the collective identity of their movements. Stories sharpened and recounted in public spaces can serve to spread and legitimize the ideologies of broader social movements.

My findings suggest, however, that the stories told by my subjects are also deeply raced and gendered. African-American community activists expressed the most self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" narratives, but white women tended to express lower levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. These findings suggest that cultural standards of femininity and variations in levels of cultural acceptance of activist discourses shape the ways candidates make political decisions and construct their biographical narratives. Majority-minority districts, and the more conservative, majority-white districts created as a consequence, likely create contexts in which racialized standards of femininity compete and social movement discourses carry varying weight.

Gender and politics researchers have long-recognized the gender norms that limit levels of women's representation in politics, including cultural expectations that women should be modest, unassuming, and exhibit a selfless devotion to their families. Indeed, the white women I interviewed constructed "deciding to run" narratives that were largely consistent with these expectations. White women running in majority-white districts likely face pressure to downplay their feminist identities in order not to alienate the median white voter in moderate and conservative districts. These women are thus unable to draw from activist discourses to present more

efficacious accounts of why they decided to run for office. Furthermore, these women must construct political narratives consonant with standards of white feminine goodness that still call women to present themselves with modesty. Ironically, the white and Latina women I interviewed who were affiliated with Annie's List, a feminist organization, presented the most concisely-worded, perhaps even packaged, low-efficacy accounts. This evidence suggests that, rather than encouraging candidates to develop more agentic "deciding to run" narratives, Annie's List actually serves to lower the level of self-efficacy women express in their stories. Because Annie's List focuses on supporting women running in swing districts, and the majority of these candidates are white women, the organization has crafted a message that resonates with white standards of femininity, emphasizing modesty while simultaneously promoting the message that women need to be recruited more heavily to run for office. This message is adopted by the candidates whom the organization has financially supported and with whom the organization has worked most closely.

My findings also suggest, however, that research has thus far only understood white standards of feminine goodness. African-American women appear to be both empowered and constrained by a different set of gendered discourses. Many of the African-American women I interviewed told "deciding to run" accounts consonant with raced-gendered expectations of being a "strong Black woman." The raced standards of Black femininity are compatible with discourses from the Civil Rights Movement, emphasizing courage and self-sacrifice against injustice. In fact, Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007, 2009) argues that these standards of Black femininity

have become embedded in Civil Rights discourses as ways of emphasizing courage and strengthening collective identities. These standards might play a role in shaping the political ambition of Black women and could go a long way toward explaining the unusual success of African-American women in achieving levels of political representation that surpass both Black men and white women.

While these strength and courage discourses deeply shape the "deciding to run" accounts of the African-American women I interviewed and may actually help to propel well-suited African-American women to run for local and statewide offices in higher numbers than their white counterparts, it is important not to romanticize these discourses. Beauboeuf-Lafontant (2007; 2009) has documented the enormous psychological costs these standards of feminine goodness impose upon African-American women. Furthermore, the success record of Black women in gaining election to office should be considered in its larger, more dismal context in which a significant proportion of Black men are disenfranchised.

Latinas present the most interesting puzzle in understanding the relationship between activist identities and stories of political ambition. The Latinas I interviewed used activist discourses in their stories. In fact, every Latina I interviewed used at least some movement discourses in her interview. Yet, Latinas were not as likely as Black women to express high levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. Part of this story is that the Latinas who were affiliated with Annie's List touted the organization's message that women need to be recruited for office through

their personal stories. In addition, deeper cultural dynamics likely play a role in shaping these patterns. Latino cultural values of feminine goodness still emphasize modesty and self-sacrifice, and these standards of feminine goodness have been incorporated into social movement discourses (Roth 2004). While movement discourses emphasizing courage run through the Latina subjects' stories, these women must still construct "deciding to run" accounts that resonate with gender norms in their communities which emphasize modesty over boldness and ambition (Blackwell 2011; Hardy-Fanta 1993; Roth 2004).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how women leaders in Texas draw from social movement discourses to construct their "deciding to run" accounts. I have argued that African-American women and Latinas express higher levels of self-efficacy in their narratives because they are more likely to draw from Civil Rights Movement discourses of courage and obligation. White women and some Latinas who expressed an affinity for the feminist movement were actually more likely to downplay their own initiative in deciding to run. I argued that the cultural and structural contexts within which these women are deciding to run plays an important role in shaping the stories they tell. In the following chapter, I examine more closely the role that campaigns play in shaping the public message of women candidates.

CHAPTER FIVE: Constructing an Intersectional Consciousness

In the previous chapter, I argued that the activist identities of African-American women and Latinas contributes to their expression of higher levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" narratives. Yet, for those who have run for office, their public stories have been shaped by the political consultants and staff who run their campaigns, as well as organizations like Annie's List that provide financial support, trainings, and consulting services for their endorsed candidates. In this chapter, I examine how these political elites shape the ways in which a candidate expresses social movement discourses in her campaign. My findings reveal how social movement messages are disseminated in the political sphere through a process of negotiation between the candidate and political elites.[1]

As part of my research on women's "deciding to run" accounts, I interviewed Ana Estrada, a young Latina who was about to launch a city council campaign. Estrada expressed a strong commitment to racial/ethnic social justice issues as well as feminism. She also expressed high levels of self-efficacy in her "deciding to run" account. As Estrada had never run for office and had not yet put together a campaign staff at the time of our interview, I recognized that conducting ethnographic fieldwork

[1] A version of this chapter was published as: Frederick, Angela. 2010. "Practicing *Electoral* Politics in the Cracks: Intersectional Consciousness in a Latina Candidate's Campaign for City Council." *Gender & Society* 24: 475-498.

in her campaign would present a fruitful opportunity to examine the process by which Estrada's commitments would be shared with the public.

In this chapter, I present findings from four months of participant observation I conducted in Ana Estrada's campaign for city council. I examine Estrada's issue platform, the ways the campaign framed her message, and the campaign's voter mobilization strategies to explore when, how, and in what context Estrada expressed an intersectional consciousness during her campaign. I illuminate the ways the political context can generate gaps between a candidate's private consciousness and the message she conveys as a public leader. I argue that the intersections of race, class, and gender are critical for understanding the political strategies adopted by women of color.

Defining Intersectional Consciousness

As women in the United States have entered electoral politics in increasing numbers over the past four decades, scholars have paid significant attention to the degree to which women political leaders express a gender consciousness, often defined by a sense of solidarity with other women and prioritization of women's concerns. Yet, models put forth to analyze gender consciousness have failed to meaningfully account for the ways in which the intersections of race, class, and gender shape the consciousness of political leaders. In the previous chapter, I noted that a significant proportion of the Black and Latina leaders I interviewed employed activist discourses that encompassed race, class, and gender concerns. Research on

the activism of feminists of color has, in fact, found that women's experiences of multiple forms of oppression lead them to practice "politics in the cracks," as their activism is guided by a consciousness that lies in the fault lines between race, class, and gender politics (Springer 2001).

The literatures on women and politics and race and politics that scholars have developed over the past few decades have taken different trajectories, and the experiences, political strategies, and unique contributions of women of color have been lost "in the cracks" between both literatures. Research examining the relationship between gender consciousness and political behavior reflects this schism. The schemes scholars have developed to operationalize important concepts in studying gender consciousness have failed to capture the interactive dynamics of categories of identity. For example, researchers studying gender consciousness have often used women's identification with the "feminist" label and commitment to a so-called "women's agenda" to operationalize gender consciousness (Harnois 2005). These models overlook the role that racial oppression has played in shaping the reluctance of many women of color to identify with feminism, even as they express solidarity with women as a group and support values of gender equality.

Feminists of color have argued that part of this reluctance is due to the fact that the feminist political agenda has focused too narrowly on issues that are of greatest concern to white, middle class women and their families. Scholars have argued that women of color have developed a political agenda that encompasses a

broader set of concerns that includes the social welfare of those community members struggling the hardest. Analyzing results from the Citizen Participation Study, Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) found that the political consciousness of women of color often includes not only a commitment to what are considered traditional women's issues, but also a commitment to alleviating human suffering. Hill Collins (2000) terms this broader community agenda "community othermothering." As Hill Collins explains, mothering encompasses more than the raising of your own children; it has meant a mothering of an entire community. This commitment to the most marginalized in one's community is reflected in the political and activist agendas of many women of color as they have worked to effect change in the public sphere.

Scholars of gender and politics have largely neglected this insight, however. For example, in her 1992 book, *Gender Consciousness and Politics*, Sue Tolleson Rinehart documented the emergence of a gender consciousness among American women and its increasing impact in creating a "gender gap" in political behavior and attitudes. Defining gender consciousness as the expression of a sense of solidarity with women as a group and concern for the sociopolitical status of women, she argued that this served as the catalyst for increased voting and political participation among women, as well as a unique set of policy preferences that highlight concern for the well-being of women and children.

Despite its contributions, Tolleson Rinehart's (1992) work fails to meaningfully account for the roles that race and class play in shaping women's

consciousness and political participation. Diane-Michele Prindeville (2003) sought to rectify this shortcoming by introducing a dual classification scheme for analyzing "race consciousness" alongside gender consciousness. Prindeville classifies race and gender consciousness separately and according to the degree to which the women representatives and activists she interviewed expressed (1) race and gender self-labeling, (2) race and gender consciousness, (3) race and gender salience, and (4) race and gender cultural motivation. Prindeville's model, however, still reflects an additive approach to race and gender and still fails to account for the dynamic ways that race and gender, along with class, interact to profoundly shape the experiences, identities, and consciousness of political leaders.

I build upon the work of Tolleson Rinehart and Prindeville to expand the concept of gender consciousness to include (a) an intersectional approach to analyzing gender consciousness and (b) an analysis of candidates' public identities in political races. I define intersectional consciousness as the simultaneous expression of solidarity with women, racial and ethnic minorities, and poor and working class voters as well as concern for the sociopolitical status of these groups. My research focuses on the extent to which an intersectional consciousness can be expressed, or be lacking, within the context of political campaigns, as well as whether particular commitments are emphasized to achieve specific goals. In this context, an intersectional consciousness will be expressed through the candidate's prioritization of concerns of these groups in her issue platform; her use of symbols, language, and

narratives to identify with and appeal to these groups; and the meaningful inclusion of these groups in voter mobilization efforts.

Within the context of political campaigns, it is important to distinguish between a political leader's private and public consciousness. The ways in which gender consciousness is publically expressed in political campaigns is an area that remains underexamined in the women and politics literature. During political races, the personas of candidates are managed through decisions negotiated by campaign professionals and the candidates; these decisions are deeply shaped by the classed, racialized, and gendered social arrangements of the culture. Candidates' campaign messages can reflect, reinforce, and challenge cultural values, and the mobilization efforts of campaigns can either help to pull new voters into the political process or reinforce the status quo by furthering the alienation of politically marginalized groups. It is important to examine the public face of consciousness, as pulls from professionals and the political context can generate schisms between candidates' private and public consciousness, schisms that cannot be detected through surveys and interviews of candidates alone. In addition, the ways that candidates manage their public identities can have important implications for political agendas and policy outcomes, as voters and interest groups hold political leaders accountable to the commitments they make when running for office.

The Candidate and the Context

I conducted this fieldwork as a volunteer in the campaign of Ana Estrada for a seat on the Hamilton city council. Hamilton is an urban center in the southwest; the city lies in a region that has one of the highest populations of Latinos in the country. About 35 percent of Hamilton residents identify their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, and Hispanics, primarily Mexicans and Mexican Americans, make up the majority of Hamilton's recent population growth. The local history and current context of residential segregation play a prominent role in shaping the economic, political, and social and cultural life of Hamilton. In the 1920s, Hamilton's city council developed a master plan for the city that included the segregation of African American residents into a corridor on the east side of the city. For decades, African American residents made up the large share of residents in this area; as recently as 1970, it was home to 80 percent of the county's African American population. Over the past few decades, however, a sizable proportion of middle class African American families have relocated to suburban neighborhoods, pulled by the lower cost of new housing stock that became available in these areas. Simultaneously, Hamilton's eastern corridor has become a largely Latino community.

Hamilton voters elect a mayor as well as six city council members. Hamilton is considered to be a politically progressive city. Though city council seats are formally nonpartisan positions, every member of the city council is currently a registered Democrat. In contrast with cities for which political parties hold the majority of political power, Hamilton politics is driven by loosely affiliated political clubs that endorse and assist political candidates. During a recent season of local

elections, a member of Hamilton's city council decided to vacate his seat to run for mayor. This presented a coveted opportunity for two political newcomers, Ana Estrada and Mark Thomas, to run against each other for the open council seat. Ana Estrada is a Latina, 34 years old at the time of the campaign, who had moved to Hamilton 11 years prior to entering the race. Prior to declaring her candidacy, Estrada had worked as a policy analyst, focusing primarily on housing issues. Estrada brought to the race a track record of public service at the local level, having served on several of the city's commissions. She was also active in the Hamilton Democratic Party and had been a committed volunteer for Hilary Clinton's presidential campaign. Estrada also held leadership positions in several organizations of politically active women. Estrada's opponent, Mark Thomas, was a practicing attorney in Hamilton before he decided to run for city council. Thomas is a white man in his 50s. Like Estrada, Thomas had been a leader in the civic life of the community, and he was regarded as an expert on local planning and environmental issues. Thomas had chaired a prominent Hamilton commission and had founded several community organizations, including a downtown neighborhood association and a ride-share program.

During the 1990s, most large U.S. cities moved from at-large city government models to representative, district-based single-member or hybrid models in which (at least some) members are elected to represent districts within communities. The prevailing belief driving this change was that at-large systems promote a "tyranny of the majority," preventing racial and ethnic minorities from having adequate

representation on local councils. Despite the national trend, Hamilton is one of the largest cities in the United States to maintain an at-large system; propositions to change this model—which have been strongly supported by middle class Latinos and working class and poor residents living in the Eastern corridor—have been rejected by voters on several occasions. Hamilton voters thus elect members for all seats on the city council.

To ensure adequate representation of minority groups and women on the city council, community leaders initiated an informal system that is known throughout the city as the "gentleman's agreement." Under this system, specific seats on the council are set aside for minority and women candidates. Of the six seats on the council, one seat is tacitly reserved for African American candidates, one seat for Hispanic candidates, and one seat for women candidates. Political elites in the community largely adhere to the gentleman's agreement, which holds that only members of these designated groups should run in each of these three seats.

The designated "woman seat" in Hamilton has always been filled by a white woman. Both African American men and women have served in the designated African American seat. However, despite their large share of the population, no Latina has ever been elected to the Hamilton city council.

Rather than run against the Hispanic incumbent for the "Hispanic seat," Ana Estrada decided to run for a council seat not designated for minority candidates. This

made the race between Estrada and Thomas one of the few in Hamilton in which a minority candidate ran against a white candidate.

The Issue Platform

Issue platforms are the vehicles through which candidates explicitly express their priorities and group loyalties. Scholars have traditionally measured gender consciousness by analyzing the degree to which a political leader prioritizes both issues on the feminist agenda, including abortion rights and reducing the gender wage gap, and issues that are considered to be part of a broader "women's agenda," including health care, child care, education, and other policy areas having a direct impact on women and children (Thomas 1994; Tolleson Rinehart 1992). Given her ties to Hamilton's feminist community, one would expect that Estrada would include in her platform a commitment to issues that are a part of what has traditionally been regarded as the "women's agenda." Indeed, throughout her campaign, Estrada was open about her pro-choice stance on abortion and expressed a commitment to improving health care and child care for families in the community. Yet, Estrada's platform included a broader set of priorities that reflect an intersectional consciousness. In fact, more so than mainstream feminist concerns, issues of greatest salience to poor and working class Latinos became the cornerstones of her campaign, and traditional women's issues were often presented through the prism of this broader, intersectional platform.

Both Estrada and Thomas identified themselves as progressive Democrats, and rarely did they openly disagree on issues. In contrast to political races in which candidates with vastly different ideologies compete, the distinctions between the platforms of Estrada and Thomas lay in their issue priorities. Estrada's campaign prioritized issues of housing affordability, supporting small business entrepreneurship, and assisting Hamilton's most economically disadvantaged through the city's recession. The campaign often presented traditional women's issues within the context of class and racial inequalities. Mark Thomas's campaign, on the other hand, emphasized environmental issues and urban planning. In fact, as the race progressed, Hamilton residents began referring to Estrada and Thomas as the "affordability candidate" and the "environmental candidate."

Campaign professionals are challenged with the task of developing concise, coherent messages for the public that capture the candidate's platform. Taglines are developed and frequently incorporated into campaign literature, in candidate speeches, and in interactions with voters. For Estrada's campaign, this was: "Ana Estrada is running for Hamilton city council to protect our quality of life, position Hamilton for an economic comeback, and to make Hamilton a more affordable place for working families." This line was used on the campaign Web site, in campaign literature, and in the scripts that campaign staff and volunteers used when talking with voters. It was meant to signal to voters that Estrada's issue platform focused on alleviating economic hardship. It is notable that the word "affordability" was included in the tagline, as it indicated to voters that affordable housing and addressing

the city's rising cost of living was a priority for the candidate. The use of the term "working families" was deployed to indicate that Estrada prioritized issues that were of greatest concern to women and working class families.

Both Estrada and Thomas had the opportunity to make their issue priorities explicit during the many public forums in which they participated. During most of these forums, the candidates presented their platforms in one-minute opening and closing statements. They also answered questions posed by members of the audience, who were usually representatives of local political organizations. The candidates' differences in issue priorities were made explicit in their use of time for opening and closing statements, as well as the level of detail they provided when responding to audience questions. Consistent with her campaign's theme, Estrada used the time allotted her for opening statements to stress issues of afford-ability, the importance of supporting small businesses and the city's vulnerable populations through the economic downturn, and preserving the city's character. During one candidate forum, for example, Estrada referred to affordability three times during her one-minute opening statement. During his opening statements, Mark Thomas emphasized protecting the environment, improving transportation infrastructure, and (also) preserving Hamilton's character. These one-minute statements reflected the concise messages that campaigns wanted voters to remember.

Campaigns also prioritize issues by presenting proposals to voters on how to address certain community problems. During the speech she delivered at her

campaign's kickoff event, Estrada proposed the development of a micro lending program to support small business entrepreneurship. Estrada referred to this commitment during public forums and fundraising events throughout the campaign. In addition, she frequently referred to health care costs as a major concern she would address if elected. In campaign speeches and candidate forums, she promised to take the lead in developing plans for a medical school in the city as a way to bring jobs to the community and offer reduced health care to low-income residents. Finally, Estrada proposed providing child care subsidies to working poor mothers. Through these health care and child care proposals, Estrada addressed "woman-friendly" issues, but emphasized her commitment to poor and working class women, reflecting an intersectional consciousness.

On the surface, Estrada's issue platform, which emphasized improving affordability and reducing acute economic hardships for families, appears to be a class-based platform. An examination of the city's economic context, however, suggests that these class-based issues are simultaneously raced and gendered. The city's median family income for Latino families is under half that of white families ($40,000 compared to $91,000); the median family income for Black families is $33,000. Poverty rates for whites are half those of Latinos and one-third of African Americans. The majority of Hamilton's professional jobs are held by white residents, and Latinos make up the majority of workers in the construction industry, which has been hit hardest by the city's recent economic downturn. In addition to being raced, economic disparities are also gendered in Hamilton. One half of all Hispanic children

live in single-parent households, exacerbating the feminization of poverty and economic and educational concerns of Latino families.

Several years prior to the campaign, Hamilton's city council launched a comprehensive study to identify the major concerns of Hamilton's Latino residents. Feedback gathered through multiple community forums and surveys was analyzed, and recommendations were made to the city council. The issue of affordable housing emerged as one of the top concerns of Hamilton's Hispanic community, in addition to supporting small business entrepreneurship, the cost and accessibility of health care, and persistent education gaps. While the issue of small business entrepreneurship appears to be a race-neutral issue, it has become racialized in Hamilton as many Latino community leaders emphasize business ownership as an important avenue through which Latino families can rise to the ranks of the middle class. With the exception of an emphasis on educational disparities, Estrada's issue platform mirrored the concerns of the city's Latino community articulated in the study. Because Estrada's issue platform emphasized alleviating the hardships faced by those living "in the cracks," in the intersection of racial, class, and gender inequalities, Estrada's issue platform reflects an intersectional consciousness. As the following section will discuss, Estrada also deployed an intersectional framework to turn her issue platform into a coherent message that, taken together, exemplified an intersectional public consciousness.

Framing the Message

Estrada's issue platform included a myriad of issues that could be analyzed through raced, gendered, or classed lenses. But it is important to analyze how the campaign itself tied together Estrada's issue priorities into a coherent, consistent message. To analyze the extent to which Estrada's campaign made use of an intersectional consciousness to frame her campaign message, I examine how the campaign deployed symbols, language, and narratives to suggest her positive identification with poor and working class residents, her racial/ethnic community, and other women. While symbols, language, and narratives send more subtle messages about the candidate's loyalties than does her issue platform, these forms of framing play an important role in campaign strategies. Candidates often rely on symbols, word choice, and personal stories to suggest to groups of constituents that the candidates share their backgrounds, values, and loyalties. These gestures can play heavily in constituents' voting decisions, particularly for voters uneducated about the nuances of political issues.

During her campaign, Ana Estrada employed symbols that emphasized her identity as a Latina from working class roots. The distinct forms of these symbols suggest that Estrada's "public identity" cannot be separated into discrete categories of race, class, and gender. The campaign logos were the earliest and most prominent symbolic messages both campaigns presented to the public. Estrada's logo, with its Southwestern flare, ably captured her identity as a Latina. The words, "Ana Estrada for Hamilton City Council," were written in alternating pink and gold, and a gold sunburst served as the background, framing her name like a crown. The use of the

color pink in the logo, a color that is most closely associated with femininity, emphasized Estrada's identity as a woman candidate. One popular Hamilton blogger wrote in reference to Estrada's logo, "Pink is the new blue." Furthermore, the shades of pink and yellow used in Estrada's logo are colors that are prominently used in the southwest, reminding voters of Estrada's identity as a Latina. Thomas's logo, in contrast, conveyed his identity as a native Hamiltonian and an expert on environmental and planning issues. The greens and blues in Thomas's logo reminded voters of his commitment to the environment, and the swirl in the logo's background, resembling the Hamilton city skyline, reflected both his Hamilton roots and his expertise in urban planning.

Estrada relied on gendered language to tie her broad set of issue priorities into a cohesive message. The word "family" appeared throughout her campaign literature, her public statements, and in her campaign's tagline previously quoted. In addition, Estrada used words and phrases that suggested that she had a unique capacity for empathy and compassion. She often used the phrase "the human side of issues" to convey to her public that she was in tune to the struggles facing Hamilton families.

This language of compassion was exemplified in Estrada's only campaign commercial, which began airing a month before Election Day. The commercial depicted Estrada walking in downtown Hamilton with the skyline of buildings behind her. Estrada said:

> From valet parking to $500,000 condos, do you ever wonder if we're still in Hamilton? I'm Ana Estrada, and what makes Hamilton special is the people, not the buildings. In today's economy, we need to address the human side of issues now more than ever, from making health care more affordable, to lowering energy costs, to supporting our local businesses.

In this commercial, the campaign deployed symbolism and gendered language to appeal to working class residents. Visually, the campaign juxtaposed Estrada's body, representing her humanity, with the impersonal downtown skyline. Estrada referred critically to expensive housing and valet parking, accouterments of the wealthy, to suggest to voters that she was the candidate that best represented the interests of the working class. She deployed the phrase "the human side of issues" to emphasize her empathy for the problems facing struggling Hamilton families. Finally, Estrada folded components of her issue platform into the frame, reasserting that her issue priorities lay in helping struggling families by addressing affordability issues and supporting small business entrepreneurship.

The theme of family is prominent in the campaign message of many women candidates. Their frequent framing of issues around family reflects an adherence to political expectations placed on women candidates, as well as the prioritizing of family issues of both women leaders and women constituents to which campaign messages are often designed to appeal. Naples (1998) argues that women activists

often rely on a mothering discourse to carve a place for themselves in the public sphere without challenging traditional values about gender roles prominent in their cultural context.

Estrada, who has no children, did not deploy "mothering" rhetoric during her campaign. The campaign did, however, rely on a "family" discourse to suggest that, like mothers, Estrada would be a steward of Hamilton's families. While Estrada deployed gendered language to frame her campaign message, she also expanded the family and compassion discourses common in women candidates' campaigns to emphasize her identity as a Latina from working class roots.

Candidates often make use of biographical narratives, not only to identify themselves as members of specific communities, but also to frame their identities in ways that will resonate with particular constituent groups. While her opponent did not share many stories about his upbringing on the campaign trail, Estrada relied on narratives that reinforced her identification with Hamilton's working class and Hispanic communities. Throughout the campaign, Estrada conjured images of the small community along the Mexican border where she grew up: "I grew up in a border town. And one thing my grandparents instilled in me is that you don't measure success in terms of the individual. You measure success in terms of the family and the community." Estrada often talked about the tragedy she experienced as a young girl, when her parents and sister were killed in an automobile accident. She discussed how working in her grandparents' restaurant instilled in her the values of

hard work and family and helped her to understand the important role that small businesses play in the life of a community. Estrada also frequently discussed the financial challenges faced by her sister and brother and how her family pulls together to keep everyone afloat.

These narratives were strategically intersectional. They were meant both to signal to Hispanic voters that Estrada shared their loyalty to the community and to reassure median white voters that Estrada shared their values of hard work, determination, community, and family. Evoking images of the poor, Hispanic community in which she was raised signaled to poor and working class Hispanic constituents that she was one of them. Stories about her work in her grandparents' restaurant signaled to Hispanic voters that she understood the important role that small business entrepreneurship plays in community uplift and demonstrated her strong work ethic, a message meant to resonate particularly with white, middle class voters.

Estrada's campaign also strategically deployed stories about her family's struggles to find affordable housing. In one set of speech notes, campaign staff wrote, "Talk about your experience delivering on affordable housing and why you are running: b/c of your family's issues of affordability to personalize your values." This story about Estrada's family's financial struggles was deployed to signify to poor and working class residents that the candidate's background as a Latina from working

class roots gave her a unique capacity to both understand and be a champion for their concerns.

It is important to note that the messages Estrada deployed to emphasize her identification with Hamilton's Hispanic community were generally subtle in content. Only during one speech did I hear Estrada pronounce that, if elected, she would be the first Latina to serve on Hamilton's city council; she made this pronouncement during a speech that she delivered to a group of Hispanic supporters. Other than this pronouncement, Estrada's loyalties were demonstrated more subtly. This strategy of negotiating racial identity through coded language has been widely documented (Streb 2002) and reflects an adherence to a color-blind ideology that rejects explicit discourses about racial inequality and identity (Bonilla Silva 2006). Though Estrada's message targeted poor and working class voters, Hispanics, and women, her public presentation of intersectional consciousness was circumscribed by the desire not to alienate white voters through blatant messages expressing ethnic solidarity.

Overall, Estrada was successful in presenting an intersectional consciousness in her campaign message. Her issue platform mirrored a broader women's agenda that reflected the concerns, not only of middle class women, but also women of color, including responding to poverty and other issues of basic human need. In addition, she made use of symbols, language, and narratives to present her public identity as a Latina candidate from working class roots who was committed to nurturing the success of families and communities, particularly those experiencing acute economic

distress. The campaign relied on gendered discourses, including an emphasis on families and the use of "compassionate" language, to frame Estrada's commitment to issues of greatest salience to Hamilton's Hispanic community.

Estrada's expression of intersectional consciousness is notable, as she was able to demonstrate this consciousness within a political context that generated pressure to downplay issues important to racial and ethnic minorities, as well as to poor and working class residents. Under Hamilton's at-large electoral system, campaign professionals often discourage candidates from incorporating issues of greatest concern to working class and minority communities, and instead encourage candidates to focus on issues such as the environment and preserving neighborhood character, issues that are of primary concern to Hamilton's white, middle class voters.

I interviewed Ana Estrada about a month before her campaign for city council officially began. During this time, Estrada was being both courted and politically socialized by campaign elites. Estrada discussed the schism between her personal set of issue priorities and the issue platform that the members of the political establishment thought she should adopt.

> I think you have this core group of voters that come back and vote year after year. And we have historical data that proves that certain precincts turn out to vote, and others don't. And those precincts tend to be in central and west Hamilton. So, you have to kind of shape your message to appeal to those voters, without trying to lose, I feel, the real

> reasons why you're running. I mean, that's the balance, right? . . . Because I strongly care about affordability and helping the economically disadvantaged.

Even at this early stage, Estrada felt the conflict between negotiating her personal consciousness and the public identity most campaign professionals were telling her she should adopt. Estrada rejected this conventional wisdom by hiring a messaging consultant known for adopting unconventional strategies. Daniel Martinez is a prominent Hispanic consultant who has advised a number of campaigns of Hispanic candidates around the state. Martinez did not tow the establishment line by encouraging Estrada to tailor her campaign message to speak to wealthy white voters rather than her affinity group. Estrada explained why Martinez was the front-runner on her list of potential campaign consultants:

> He's been good at asking me what I care about. What do I see as Hamilton's strengths? What do I love about this city? What do I see as challenges? And based on my responses, he's helped me form my message. . . . Some of the other consultants I feel are just telling me what I need to say, or what I need to be thinking about or focused on.

With Martinez's help, Ana Estrada was able to present an intersectional consciousness in her campaign message, emphasizing her commitment to Hamilton's Hispanic community, often through gendered discourses. Most notably, the campaign crafted a message that reflected Estrada's personal commitment to

affordability and other issues of greatest salience to Hamilton's Hispanic community. The strategies underlying the campaign's voter mobilization efforts, however, emphasized Estrada's identity as a woman in order to court the vote of middle class and upper-class white women.

Voter Mobilization

On the surface, Estrada's campaign mobilization strategies also appear to reflect an intersectional consciousness, as the campaign targeted both women and Hispanics for voter mobilization. A deeper investigation, however, reveals that the campaign primarily deployed mobilization strategies that emphasized Estrada's identity as a woman to court the vote of white, middle class and upper-class women. Though Estrada's campaign did make notable efforts to mobilize Hispanic voters, efforts that community members complain are too often absent in city council races, Estrada's campaign focused the majority of its resources on white, middle class and upper-class women.

I showed up early on a Saturday morning for the campaign's first shift of block-walking. Erin Michaels, Estrada's campaign manager, greeted us with a muffin and a clipboard containing a script, flyers about the candidate, and a list of names and addresses of voters residing on a street winding through one of Hamilton's wealthier neighborhoods. As the volunteers flipped through the heap of papers attached to our clipboards, Michaels instructed us on how to introduce ourselves and the candidate.

She then explained the campaign's mobilization strategy: "When only 10 percent of people vote in city elections, it wouldn't be a good use of our resources to talk to everyone. We want to target likely voters." This strategy of targeting "likely voters" led the campaign to focus mobilization efforts on white, middle class and upper-class voters. Given Estrada's ties to Hamilton's feminist community, white, middle class women became the focal point for mobilization efforts.

The campaign's early mobilization efforts centered around small events the campaign called "neighborhood coffees." A local resident would agree to host a neighborhood coffee at her home. The campaign would generate a list of frequent voters in the host's neighborhood and would invite these voters to the coffee by telephone and in person. At these coffees, Estrada would have the opportunity to make a plea for support. These neighborhood coffees served two purposes: to raise money for the campaign and to provide a reason to contact voters in the precinct in which the coffee was being held. Most campaign professionals suggest that an unknown candidate must reach the voter several times to achieve name recognition. The neighborhood coffees provided an opportunity to make these contacts.

With few exceptions, the hosts of these neighborhood coffees were white, middle class and upper-class women. Though a few Hispanic community leaders did host such gatherings, the campaign's strategy was to hold the majority of these events in wealthier neighborhoods. As a member of the campaign staff explained to me after the race, "We worked to make sure we hit different circles, and not necessarily circles

that were always typical of the candidate." The white, middle class and upper-class women with whom Estrada had worked in local feminist organizations played a prominent role in these organizing efforts, as they offered opportunities for the candidate to reach members of the wealthier white communities to which she did not have close ties. The campaign did attempt to reach more Latinos by relaxing their criteria for "frequent voters" for Hispanic residents; yet the fact that the majority were held in Hamilton's wealthier white neighborhoods made it unlikely that Hispanic voters would attend. As part of this effort, a Hispanic voter was not visited by a campaign volunteer unless she had both a voting record and an address that fell within a predominantly white neighborhood. Since the majority of the campaign's mobilization efforts centered around these neighborhood coffees, the campaign did not reach many Hispanic or low-income households.

During the last month of the race, campaign staff shifted the focus of mobilization efforts from neighborhood coffees and other fundraising events to Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. Though the campaign did organize some block-walking efforts and presence at polling locations during this time, the majority of staff and volunteer efforts were funneled into calling potential voters. Women and Hispanics were identified as the two major groups to be targeted for GOTV efforts, but the majority of GOTV resources were funneled into mobilizing white, middle class and upper-class voters.

Two different sets of assumptions undergirded the campaign's GOTV efforts. First, Estrada could gain the coveted support of median white voters by appealing to white women. Second, Estrada need not concentrate the bulk of resources on trying to mobilize Latino voters because the frequent Latino voter was already a supporter and the infrequent Latino voter was too difficult to mobilize. The most evident indication of the disparity in mobilization efforts was the discrepancy in the size of the calling lists generated by campaign staff. Almost 5,000 voter names were on the women's list; the Hispanic list contained only about 3,000 names. Furthermore, a sizable proportion of the telephone numbers on the Hispanic list were nonworking numbers, reducing even further the number of Hispanic households that were actually reached. In addition, the majority of campaign resources, including staff and volunteer time, were devoted to calling households on the women's list. Volunteers from a local Hispanic Democratic organization made the majority of calls to the Hispanic list, while campaign staff and volunteers concentrated efforts on calling those on the women's list. This means that less training and strategizing went into the calls made to Hispanic residents.

Though the women's list could have included a racially diverse sample of Hamilton households, in fact it was generated using criteria that minimized this possibility. The campaign generated the list of women voters using the rule of "Double D, Double C." Only those women who had voted in the previous two Democratic primary elections as well as the previous two citywide elections were included in this list. Patterns of voter participation in Hamilton meant that the list

primarily contained the names of white, middle class and upper-class women living on the west side of the city.

The campaign message was also altered to better appeal to white, women voters. The script used when talking to women voters was the following:

> Hi, my name is Angela, and I'm calling on behalf of Ana Estrada to remind you that city elections are coming up right around the corner. Ana is running for Place 3 on the city council to protect our quality of life, position Hamilton for an economic comeback, and to make Hamilton a more affordable place for working families. Ana has a long history of standing up for women and children, and she has been endorsed by our firefighters, our teachers, Hamilton's Neighborhoods Association, and nine Democratic clubs. Ana hopes she can count on your support this election.

The campaign sought to appeal to white women voters by emphasizing Estrada's commitment to women's and children's issues, as well as to highlight the women-friendly endorsements she received from groups, such as teachers and several women's Democratic organizations. The information provided in the script is not as unusual as what was omitted. Absent from the script were any references to Estrada's concern for the issues of most importance to Hispanic residents, to the racially based clubs that endorsed her, or the fact that if elected she would have been the first Latina ever to serve on Hamilton's city council.

This omission was intentional on the part of the campaign. I was asked to write the first draft of this calling script. I had included a statement which indicated that, if elected, Estrada would be the first Latina ever to have served on the city council. A strategist for the campaign told me to remove this line, arguing that emphasizing Estrada's Latina identity, and the possibility that she would be the first Latina council member, could be a turnoff to white women. The strategist explicitly acknowledged that the "women's list" was generated with the intention of primarily reaching white women voters and, thus, the message delivered to these women should mirror their interests.

The emphasis on targeting frequent white voters was not matched by equal attention to frequent Hispanic voters. Members of the campaign's inner circle fiercely debated whether to target frequent Hispanic voters for GOTV efforts. Some campaign staff thought that frequent Hispanic voters were (a) already likely to vote and (b) most likely to vote for Estrada due to her shared ethnicity. The field director explained to me after a brewing conflict erupted within the campaign, "Some of the people on staff subscribe to the idea that they don't need to target Hispanic voters because the ones who vote will vote for Ana anyway. But, you know, Hispanics want to be asked for their support just like everyone else."

Why did the campaign emphasize Estrada's identity as a woman and downplay Estrada's identity as a Hispanic American in its mobilization efforts? One of the main criticisms of at-large electoral systems such as Hamilton's is that, in order

to yield the highest results per campaign resources, political strategists will often steer campaigns away from targeting minority voters for mobilization, even if these communities are considered the candidate's affinity groups. The underlying thinking behind this strategy is that, due to lower voter turnout rates in neighborhoods with large numbers of poor and minority residents, campaigns will get more bang for their buck by targeting white, middle class neighborhoods, whose residents turn out to vote in higher numbers. The strategy of targeting the median white voter became the dominant philosophy driving mobilization efforts in Ana Estrada's campaign. Estrada spoke to me about this strategy when I interviewed her a month before the campaign's official launch:

> One thing that struck me is that I was told don't focus so much on the Hispanic vote. You know, "You need to focus more on the white, middle class vote." . . . I think because, unfortunately, much to our dismay in the Hispanic community, Hispanics don't turn out to vote. And you know, you could make special efforts to get out the vote in Hispanic communities, but the historical data isn't there to show that they do turn out. And with limited resources and limited time, you have to go after the people who do vote and have a longstanding history of voting. And like I said, that tends to be people in central and west Hamilton, and white, middle and upper-class voters. And that's something that's disheartening to me as a Latina, because I do want to reach out to the Hispanic community. And I will. You know,

> because that's my ethnic identity. And I will be reaching out to them. But, I also need to be focused on appealing to the people who vote.

While Estrada's private commitments to Hispanic and low-income residents were reflected in her campaign message, her campaign's mobilization strategy did not reflect her desire to mobilize Hispanic voters. Estrada had also faced pressure to tailor her campaign message to appeal to the median white voter, but the presence of an unorthodox messaging strategist on the campaign staff allowed her to resist this pressure to some degree. This consultant was not responsible for decisions about the campaign's mobilization strategy, however. While decisions about targeting mobilization efforts were the source of some conflict within the campaign, no one with the power to shape Estrada's mobilization strategy believed anything contrary to the professional consensus. Estrada herself, given her background in public policy, was in a better position to help shape her campaign's messaging strategy. Her lack of direct experience in campaign mobilization meant that she was less able to shape the strategy undergirding the campaign's mobilization efforts.

Conclusion

Ana Estrada was ultimately unsuccessful in her bid for a seat on Hamilton's city council; her opponent took the seat with twice as many votes as Estrada received. Even so, this case study of a campaign illuminates the forms an intersectional consciousness might take in electoral politics and the complex balancing of elements of intersectional identities that political campaigns often require. A candidate's

intersectional consciousness can be emphasized, or it can be downplayed, even rendered invisible, by campaign strategies formulated within a given political context. Ana Estrada's campaign presented an intersectional consciousness in her message, using gendered discourses to frame her commitment to issues of greatest concern to Hamilton's Hispanic and low-income communities. The campaign's mobilization efforts targeted both women and Hispanics, but focused most of its resources on courting the vote of middle class and upper-class white women.

Contrary to recent assertions that intersectionality has outlived its usefulness as an analytic tool, my research suggests several important reasons why an intersectional analysis of political races is important in furthering our understanding of the raced, classed, and gendered dynamics shaping political life. Research on women public leaders has not emphasized the particular dilemmas facing minority women candidates. Analyzing when and how these candidates present an intersectional consciousness can deepen our understanding of the challenges facing minority women candidates within various political contexts.

While there are no doubt a myriad of reasons why Estrada's opponent was able to take the seat with twice as many votes as Estrada received, the political context cannot be overlooked as one of the major disadvantages Estrada faced as a Latina candidate. The dilemmas that Estrada and campaign professionals faced in deciding which voters to target for messaging and mobilization efforts are relevant in other political contexts. The schisms that can be generated between candidates'

private consciousness and their public messages and mobilization efforts, the price candidates can pay for presenting an intersectional consciousness during political races, and the strategies candidates and campaigns deploy to try to display an intersectional consciousness and attract a wide array of voters are factors that should be examined in future research on minority women candidacies.

Not only can an analysis of intersectional consciousness tell us much about candidates, but it can offer us some insights into the puzzle of low voter turnout in low-income and minority communities. Quantitative models have been used to measure the impact of the presence of minority and women candidates on voter turnout, producing mixed results. These models, however, have thus far failed to differentiate the degree to which the campaigns of these candidates actually attempt to substantively appeal to minority voters. Research on the degree to which candidates display a public intersectional consciousness might provide an important key to understanding factors that shape levels of voter participation in underrepresented communities.

Since the second wave of feminism, the United States has seen a rise in the number of organizations committed to increasing levels of women's representation in political bodies. Many of these local, statewide, and national organizations offer financial and other support to women candidates who have demonstrated a "gender consciousness," often narrowly defined by candidates' stance on abortion. Many of these organizations participate in campaigns by mobilizing their membership to vote,

volunteer, and generate support for endorsed women candidates. Without a broader definition of "gender consciousness," these organizations and their members can fall into the trap of offering the majority of their support and resources to women candidates who support an agenda that reflects the narrow agenda of white, middle class feminists.

This case study suggests one other direction for future research. Intersectional analyses often begin with analyzing the experiences of those who are at the intersections of multiple oppressions of race, gender, and class. Intersectional analysis can and should be employed to analyze the issue platforms, message frames, and voter mobilization strategies of those who do not experience multiple forms of oppression. For example, the campaign of Estrada's opponent, Mark Thomas, was just as meaningfully shaped by his social positioning as Estrada's campaign was shaped by hers. Thomas's emphasis on environmental issues in a broad sense, with no attempt to include environmental concerns of specific communities or neighborhoods, reflects his social position as a white, upper-class progressive. Similarly, his lack of emphasis on family—not generally framed as a "men's issue"—is just as gendered as Estrada's rhetoric on community, family, and compassion. Future research should expand intersectional analyses to include an examination of the raced and gendered content of campaigns of white men and women, as well as men of color.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion

As I began this research in 2007, I often heard the following story circulating among women's political organizations: When you tell a man he has four of the five skills needed to run for office, he says "Great, I'm ready!" But, when you tell a woman she has four of the five skills needed to run for office, she is more likely to say, "Well, let me take a few more years to work on the fifth.""

This narrative, which has filtered from political science scholarship to women's political organizations, reflects and reinforces the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation in political office, that women don't win because women don't run. Yet, as I have demonstrated in the pages of this dissertation, there is much more variation and many more complexities in women's "deciding to run" narratives than the reluctance explanation suggests.

In this dissertation, I have presented findings from 46 interviews I conducted with women leaders in Texas and four months of fieldwork I conducted in a Latina candidate's political campaign to examine the stories women tell to explain their decisions whether or not to run for office. I have analyzed how women draw from gendered, raced, and social movement discourses to negotiate the disjunction between their drive for public office and dominant gender norms. Contrary to the reluctance explanation for women's under-representation, most of the candidates and potential candidates I interviewed expressed moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in their

"deciding to run" accounts. Furthermore, even the women who expressed low levels of self-efficacy in their narratives presented stories that contained complexities, ambiguities, and omissions consonant with storytelling practices.

I found that the "deciding to run" narratives that African-American women and Latinas employ are distinct from the stories white women use to explain their decisions whether or not to run for office, as they more often draw from civil rights discourses of courage, obligation, and commitment to their causes. I have argued that structural factors such as majority-minority and majority-white voting districts play a large role in shaping the "deciding to run" accounts of candidates and potential candidates. Many of the women who expressed lower levels of self-efficacy in their stories were running in competitive swing districts that necessitate a more professionalized party system of candidate recruitment. In other words, it might be part of the candidate emergence process in certain districts to be tapped on the shoulder to run for office, whereas other districts offer the latitude for women to make the decision to run for office without having to cultivate support from party elites beforehand.

Raced-gendered and social movement discourses also take different forms and carry varying weight in these political contexts. While in the past gender scholars have tended to universalize gender norms dominant in the white community, scholars of intersectionality have argued that standards of feminine goodness are also deeply raced. White women leaders running in majority-white districts likely contend with

discursive legacies that call women to present themselves with modesty and to downplay social movement identities. Latinas have also negotiated strict divisions between the private and public spheres, though their participation in the labor market and social movements have enabled them to challenge these strict boundaries. Black women, on the other hand, contend with gendered discourses that emphasize their strength and self-sacrifice, and these gendered discourses are reinforced as part of the discursive legacy of the Civil Rights Movement.

I have argued that feminist organizations actually encourage women to downplay their political ambition in the attempt to spread their social movement messages that women need to be recruited more heavily to run for office. These messages play an important role in influencing the reluctance story told by most of the white women I interviewed.

My findings challenge us to reexamine the reluctance explanation for women's sparse levels of office-holding, which suggests that women are under-represented in politics because they lack the confidence to enter political races. In addition, I have highlighted the political ambition of African-American women and Latinas, whose remarkable success records in seeking and winning elective office have not been accounted for in current paradigms explaining women's under-representation. Finally, my research has illuminated the cultural dynamics underlying women's "deciding to run" explanations, as I have examined how women draw from

raced-gendered and social movement discourses to account for their political decisions.

Rethinking the Reluctance Explanation

My findings have several important contributions to make to our understanding of the forces that continue to limit women's political representation. First, my research suggests that there is far more variation in women's "deciding to run" accounts than the reluctance explanation predicts. In fact, only 14 of the candidates and potential candidates I interviewed expressed low levels of self-efficacy in their "deciding to run" accounts. Far more of the women I interviewed expressed moderate to high levels of self-efficacy in their narratives. While my findings are not generalizeable, they do have important implications that should be taken into account as we continue to develop our understanding of women's political ambition. While not representative, my sample does include an unusually high proportion of African-American women and Latinas. The racial and ethnic diversity in my sample likely played an important role in the variation in stories I uncovered in my research. I found that African-American women and Latinas were more likely to express higher levels of self-efficacy in their narratives than the white women I interviewed. These findings suggest that the reluctance explanation might reflect the narratives of white women, but likely falls short of capturing the narratives of women of color, who have been under-represented in quantitative research on gender and political ambition. These findings can play a role in helping to explain the puzzle of

success for women of color. Black women and Latinas often run in very different political contexts than white women. They are more likely to have ties to social movement activism traditions, and they draw from cultural standards of femininity that are quite different from those dominant in white communities. Future research on gender and political ambition should take these contexts into account as scholars conduct research and make generalizations about women's political ambition.

My research also suggests that narrative analysis is an important research method through which women's expression of political ambition should be understood. Our knowledge of political ambition has been based on surveys that have too often treated women's "deciding to run" accounts as objective measures of political ambition rather than narratives that reflect the structural and discursive contexts within which these women make political decisions. Most of the "deciding to run" narratives I gathered contained some element of personal initiative in the decision-making process, and most also contained acknowledgements of the influence of others. Yet, the candidates I interviewed made strategic decisions to emphasize one aspect of their decision-making process over others. Many of the low-efficacy candidates tried to present themselves as "accidental candidates," whose decisions to run for office were made by others. Many of the high-efficacy candidates, on the other hand, emphasized their confidence and personal initiative, downplaying the role that others played in preparing them for political candidacies. Even in my brief exchanges with the women I interviewed, I uncovered complexities, ambiguities, and omissions in their "deciding to run" accounts, characteristics that are essential

features of narratives. The ambiguities contained in these women's stories suggest that recounting one's path into public office requires strategic attention to the gendered discursive context, as women construct these stories as part of their strategies to negotiate the double standards imposed on women in politics and other masculinized professions. And as I demonstrated in Chapter Five, women candidates do not construct their personal narratives in a vacuum. Campaign professionals help to shape these narratives, drawing from cultural and political discourses to construct the candidate's biographical narrative to appeal to her public.

While my research exposes some limitations to the reluctance explanation, I do not argue that the explanation is wholly inadequate in explaining at least part of the story of women's persistent under-representation in U.S. politics. I do argue that we need to conduct more extensive research specifically on the experiences and narrative strategies of women of color, including African-American women, Latinas, and Asian women. Far too little attention has been paid to understanding the dynamics shaping the tremendous success rate of Latinas and African-American women in winning election to office on the state and local levels. Right now, we do not know whether the reluctance explanation represents the experiences of women of color or whether this explanation most accurately represents the experiences of white women from pipeline professions into political office.

I also argue that we need to make use of qualitative research to examine the narrative strategies of women leaders and potential candidates. Quantitative surveys

tend to oversimplify women's experiences, stripping their responses of their cultural and structural contexts. In depth interviews can better capture the complexities in women's biographical accounts, and ethnographic research is well-suited to illuminate the process by which women's public personas are constructed and reshaped by campaign professionals, parties, and political organizations. While these methods are not favorites of political scientists, they have long traditions in sociology. This may be an important place where qualitative sociologists can make major contributions to our understanding of political life.

Finally, I argue that we should push our analysis of women's political ambition beyond the socialization model, which has been central to our understanding of women's political ambition. Yes, scholars have documented women's expressed reluctance to enter political races. And yes, it is more than reasonable to conclude that women's lower political ambition compared to men plays an important role in women's under-representation in political office. Yet, the context leading women to express lower levels of ambition have not often been appropriately interrogated in research on gender and ambition. The socialization model leads us to believe that women are their own worst enemies when it comes to seeking and winning elective office, that it is women's own lack of confidence and hesitancy to run for office which is the greatest barrier to be overcome. Yet, if we interrogate the context within which women's "deciding to run" stories are shaped, we can understand that the answer to increasing women's representation must run far deeper than simply encouraging women to run for office. Taking a narrative approach in analyzing these

accounts, we come to understand that these stories are not precise representations of women's political ambition. While these narratives are shaped in part by internalized gender norms, they are also part of women's more conscious efforts to "do gender" in ways that are consonant with the raced-gendered values of their communities. White women in particular are pressured to downplay political ambition, which is read masculine.

In addition, we must also interrogate both our own definitions of political ambition and the political context as we seek to understand women's reluctance to enter political races. Even our definitions of political ambition often run counter to standards of femininity across racial and ethnic communities, as these definitions are built on the assumption that self-interest is the primary motivator for seeking elective office. Asking the question, "Would you consider running for office in the future?" may tap more into masculinized motivations for seeking political office and mask women's motivations for seeking elective office. One must speculate that women's answers might be quite different to questions such as the following: "If your community was in a crisis and needed your leadership, would you consider running for office? If you saw an opportunity to really make a difference on the issue you care about, would you enter a political race? Or if members of your party came to you and asked you to run, would you consider a run for political office?

The reluctance explanation for women's under-representation encourages us to consider women themselves as the major barrier to women's electability. Given that

the reluctance explanation carries the most weight with gender and politics scholars as well as women's political organizations, it is not surprising that the solution to increasing women's representation has been to try to encourage women to run for office and party elites to recruit women candidates more heavily. This approach, however, leaves unexamined the political context in which women are having to make decisions about whether or not to run. When I asked my subjects why they did not want to run for office, most of them expressed doubts, not about their leadership capabilities once elected to office, but rather, whether they had a skin thick enough to handle the brutal character of campaigning. Yet, we must ask ourselves, are women less suited for political leadership when they lack these qualities? Does our masculinized electoral system help us to select the most capable, ethical leaders for political office? Broader approaches, including campaign finance reform, could reduce the intensity of campaigning and should be included in strategies to increase levels of women's representation.

Stories Still Untold

In this research, I have argued that narrative analysis is a method that can make important contributions to our understanding of women's political paths. Yet, there are a number of stories still left untold. My research has illuminated the narratives of African-American women and Latinas, who have too often been under-represented in quantitative research. I found that African-American women and Latinas, particularly those who enter politics from activist backgrounds, are more

likely to emphasize their courage in deciding to run for office; their sense of obligation to accept this challenge; and their confidence in their abilities to run, win, and lead. If these findings are found to hold true in generalizeable samples, we might have an explanation for the puzzle of success for women of color in state and local politics. Yet, we still do not understand why the success of women of color sloughs off at the national level. One observation I made as I conducted this research is that the white women I interviewed were more closely tied to feminist political organizations like Annie's List that target women candidates in swing districts. While women of color might experience a political opening in majority-minority districts, they may find themselves with fewer networks to prepare them for national races. Future research should examine the factors shaping, not only the puzzle of success, but why these success rates for women of color shrink at the national level.

I began Chapter One by discussing Michelle Bachman's narrative transformation as she moved from state legislator to Presidential Candidate. I did not, however, include Republican women in my study due to lack of response from Republican candidates I contacted. Future research should examine the narrative strategies of Republican women, as these women are likely to deploy different strategies than Democratic women. It might be the case that Republican women are allowed to present themselves as more assertive than Democratic women because they are already distanced from the feminist label in ways that Democratic women are not.

My study included only women candidates and potential candidates. Though I found interesting distinctions between the "deciding to run" accounts of Black women, Latinas, and white women; the narrative strategies of white men and men of color were not included in this analysis. As I have argued that narrative analysis is a useful method for understanding political ambition, future research should also examine the narrative strategies of men. Just as women's "deciding to run" accounts have been treated as objective measures of political ambition, so have men's. By examining men's "deciding to run" accounts as gendered performances, we are likely to find that the presumed gender gap in political ambition is exaggerated by men's narrative strategies of inflating their autonomy and confidence. Given my findings for Latinas and African-American women, it would also be interesting to examine how men deploy social movement discourses to construct their "deciding to run" accounts and how their narrative strategies resemble, and are distinct from, those of women activists.

One limitation of my own study and most of the work on political ambition is that scholars have tended to take a static approach to examining political ambition. One of the potential candidates I interviewed, who had stated that she would never consider running for political office, recently told me that she is now considering running for a city council seat in the near future. A fruitful avenue for future research on narrative and political ambition would be to examine how women's stories change as their careers develop and as they come into closer contact with political and social movement organizations.

Finally, I have argued that social movement discourses play an important role in raising levels of self-efficacy in the accounts of Latinas and African-American women, and I explored how campaign professionals and the political context shaped the public message of a Latina city council candidate. Future research should examine how women activists succeed and fall short of carrying activist discourses into formal politics. It is important to bring these insights into our work to understand what difference women can make in the political sphere.

Table 1:

Master List of Subjects

Table 1: Master List of Subjects								
Pseudonym	**Race**	**Highest Position Campaigned For**	**Year Ran**	**Elected**	**Serving at Time of Interview**	**Professional Background**	**Level of Self-Efficacy**	**Level of Activist Discourse**
Ana	Latina	City Council	2009	No	No	Government	High	High
Antoinette	Latina	None	N/A	No	No	Homemaker	High	High
Aurora	Latina	Texas House	1996	Yes	Yes	Law	Mid	High
Barbara	Black	Texas House	1996	Yes	Yes	Customer Service	High	High
Beverly	Black	City Council	2006	Yes	Yes	Law	High	Mid
Brenda	White	Texas House	2006	Yes	Yes	Medical	Low	Low
Carla	Black	School Board	2002	Yes	Yes	Business	Low	Mid
Carol	Black	Texas House	2005	Yes	Yes	Education	High	Mid

Table 1 (continued)

Carrie	White	Texas House	1990's	Yes	No	Finance	Low	Low
Celia	Latina	Texas House	1996	Yes	Yes	Community Organizing	High	High
Christina	White	None	N/A	No	No	Government	High	Mid
Delila	Latina	Texas House	1994	Yes	Yes	Law	Low	High
Denise	Black	Local Judiciary	2002	No	No	Law	High	High
Dorothy	White	None	N/A	No	No	Retired/Government	Low	Mid
Elizabeth	White	None	N/A	No	No	Government/Social Work	Mid	Mid
Gail	White	Texas House	2006	Yes	Yes	Nonprofit Management	Mid	High
Gloria	Latina	Texas House	2004	Yes	Yes	Law	Mid	Mid
Jennifer	Black	None	N/A	No	No	Government	Low	High
Joanna	Latina	City Council	2008	Yes	Yes	Politics	Mid	High
Kimberly	Black	Texas House	1993	Yes	Yes	Business	Low	Low
Linda	White	City Council	2002	Yes	No	Public Finance	Mid	Low
Lisa	White	None	N/A	No	No	Nonprofit Management	High	High

Table 1 (continued)

Lorena	Latina	State School Board	1970's	No	No	Community Organizing	Mid	High
Margaret	White	None	N/A	No	No	Lobbyist	Mid	High
Marilyn	Black	None	N/A	No	No	Finance	High	High
Maritza	Latina	Texas Senate	1990's	Yes	Yes	Medical	Mid	High
Marla	White	City Council	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Business	High	Low
Martha	Black	Texas House	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Business	Low	Low
Mary	White	City Council	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Business	Low	High
Melina	Latina	Texas House	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Government	Mid	Mid
Monica	Latina	County Commission	1990's	Yes	Yes	Community Organizing	High	High
Nikki	Black	City Council	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Government/Nonprofit	Mid	High
Patricia	White	City Council	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Business	Low	High
Rachel	White	None	N/A	No	No	Government	Low	High
Rebecca	White	Texas House	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Nonprofit Management	Low	Low
Sam	White	City Council	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Business	Mid	Mid

Table 1 (continued)

Sandrah	Black	Texas House	1970's	Yes	Yes	Law	High	High
Sarah	White	Texas House	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Higher Ed.	Mid	Low
Sarah	White	None	N/A	N/A	No	Politics	Mid	Mid
Shani	Black	None	N/A	No	No	Government	Mid	High
Sofia	Latina	Local Judiciary	1990's	Yes	Yes	Law	High	Mid
Sue	White	School Board	2005-09	Yes	Yes	Consultant	Mid	Low
Suzanne	White	Texas House	2000-04	No	No	Nonprofit Management	Low	High
Veronica	Black	None	N/A	No	No	Politics	High	High
Victoria	Latina	None	N/A	No	No	Finance	Low	High
Viola	Black	Texas House	1970's	Yes	No	Homemaker	High	High

Table 2

Sample by Race/Ethnicity

Table 2. Sample by Race/Ethnicity				
	White	Black	Latina	Total
Candidates	12	10	11	33
Potential Candidates	7	4	2	13
Total	19	14	13	46

Table 3

Years Candidates First Ran for Highest Office

Table 3.
Years Candidates First Ran for Highest Office

Office	1970's	1980's	1990's	2000-04	2000-09	Total
Legislature	2	0	7	2	7	18
State school board	1	0	0	0	0	1
City Council	0	0	0	1	8	9
Other Local	0	0	2	2	1	5
Total	3	0	9	5	16	33

Table 4

Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy

Table 4.
Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy

	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Candidates	11	12	10	33
Potential Candidates	5	4	4	13
Total	16	16	14	46

Table 5

Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Office

Table 5.
Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Office

Office	High	Mid	Low	Total
Legislature	8	6	4	18
City Council	3	4	2	9
Other Local	3	1	1	5
State School Board	0	1	0	1
None	5	4	4	13
Total	19	16	11	46

Table 6

Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Year First Ran for Highest Office

Table 6.
Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Year First Ran for Highest Office

Year	High	Mid	Low	Total
2005-09	4	7	5	16
2000-04	1	2	2	5
1990's	4	2	3	9
1980's	0	0	0	0
1970's	2	1	0	3
Total	11	12	10	33

Table 7

Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Race/Ethnicity

Table 7.
Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Race/Ethnicity

	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Black	8	2	4	14
Latina	5	6	2	13
White	3	8	8	19
Total	16	16	14	46

Table 8

Potential Candidates' Levels of Self-Efficacy by Race/Ethnicity

Table 8.
Potential Candidate's Levels of Self-Efficacy by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Black	2	1	1	4
Latina	1	0	1	2
White	2	3	2	7
Total	5	4	4	13

Table 9

White Women's Levels of Self-Efficacy by Office

Table 9.
White Women's Levels of Self-Efficacy by Office

Office	Self-Efficacy			
	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Legislature	0	2	4	6
City Council	2	2	1	5
School board	0	1	0	1
None	2	3	2	7
Total	4	8	7	19

Table 10

Subjects' Levels of Activist Discourses by Race/Ethnicity

Table 10.
Subjects' Levels of Activist Discourses by Race/Ethnicity

	High	Moderate	Low	Total
Black	9	3	2	14
Latina	10	3	0	13
White	6	5	7	19
Total	26	11	9	46

Table 11

Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy & Activist Discourses

Table 11. Subjects' Levels of Self-Efficacy and Activist Discourses					
	Activist Discourse				
Self-Efficacy		High	Moderate	Low	Total
	High	11	8	7	26
	Mid	4	5	2	11
	Low	1	3	5	9
	Total	16	16	14	46

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